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MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

By ADA STERLING

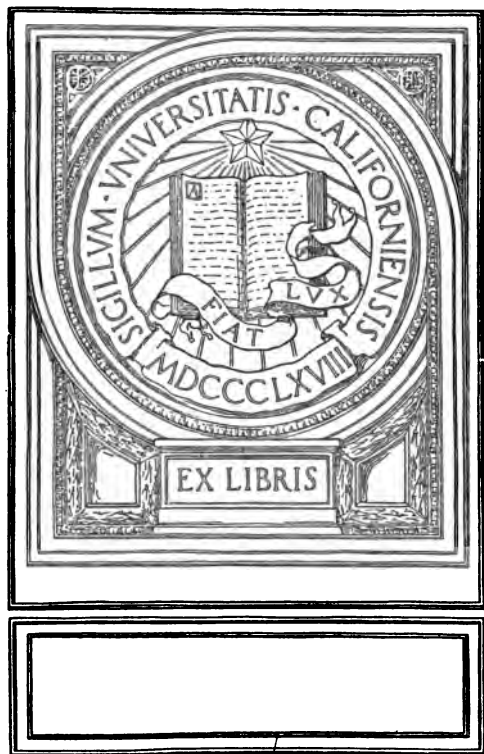
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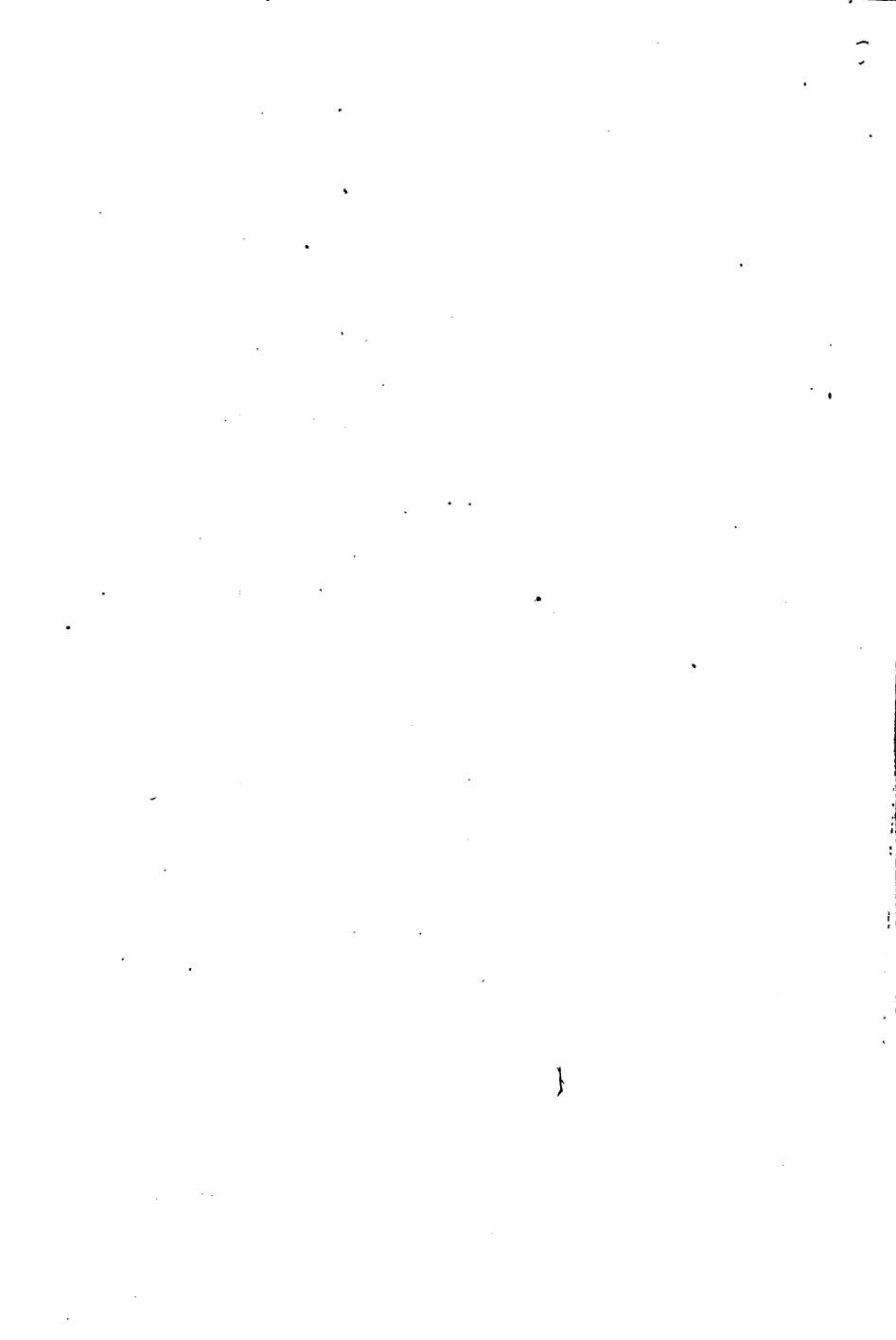
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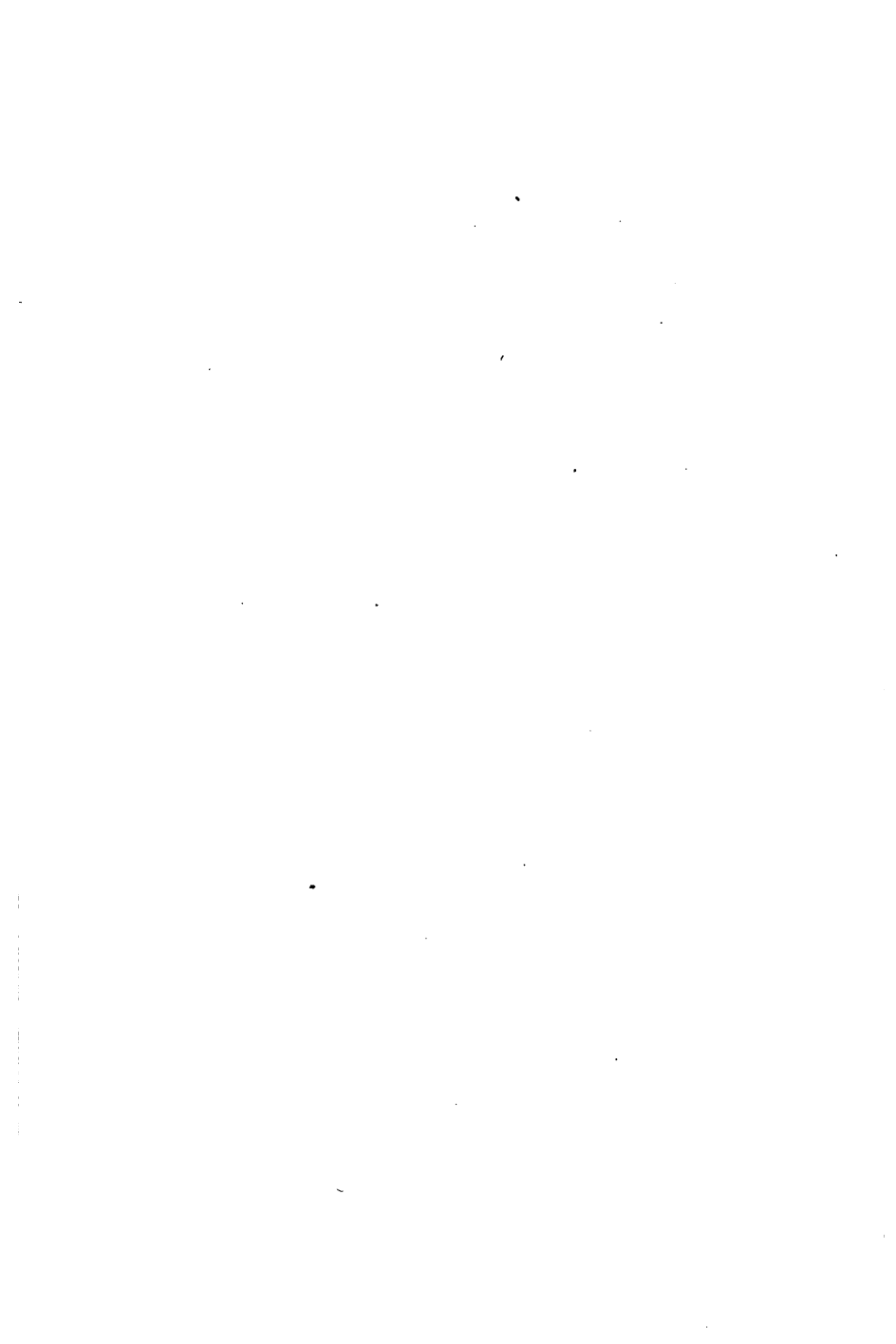


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Dear Keyford Kendrick:

I send you this story of a Queen, also a sacrifice, but who rises again and again to haunt the world until it appraises her justly. until it shall measure her innocence, since proof, real, has never been given of her guilt.

In Easter Greeting from Ada Sterling
April 17th, 1927

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

MARY,
QUEEN OF SCOTS

A DRAMA IN VERSE

IN TWO PERIODS: EIGHT SCENES

BY
ADA STERLING
4

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To the gifted artist who inspired the writing of the play

JULIA ARTHUR

M165779

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is unlikely that Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, with which, in numerous versions and adaptations, the names of Rachel, Ristori, Janauschek, and Modjeska have been linked, will ever be transcended; this, despite the accusations that have been brought against it by the hypercritical. One of these is that the work is historically inaccurate, notably in the great garden scene. This, however, evokes the question as to what historical play is historically accurate?

In the making of the present work, numerous documents, diaries, plays, and other literary treatments of the story of the unfortunate Mary Stuart have been examined, including the memoirs of James Melvil (covering his service as Secretary to Mary, in France, while she was still Dauphine and, afterward, while she reigned there), and Lord Bacon's guarded summing up of her rival's character in his *In Felicem Memoriam Elizabethae*. Their testimony, and that of Brantôme, and others, is that of living witnesses. The result of reading it in the present author's mind has been increasing reverence for the accuracy of the German poet's drama.

What constitutes the great objections to it for theatre purposes today is its outgrown literary and dramatic form, in which great flights of oratory take the places that should be given to rapid dialogue and action; also, that it is an incomplete story. It opens when Mary Stuart, after eighteen years of imprison-

ment, had almost reached the martyrdom she was to undergo in her forty-fifth year. It is hard, however, to conceive of a stronger treatment of her tragedy at that period. Certainly Swinburne, with Schiller before him, fell far behind his predecessor in his drama of the same period, and of the same name. Nowadays, largely because of his old-time fashioning, Schiller's work has fallen among the shadows.

In the play offered herewith, the effort has been to set a comprehensive life story of Scotland's unfortunate Queen within the compass of a modern theatre performance; and, the conviction being strong that Schiller's treatment of the Stuart's final tragedy represents the apex of attainment, the author has dared, not merely frankly and freely, but in homage as well, to base the second period of this play upon the skeleton of that work, re-forming the elements of the debated garden scene, while retaining, it is hoped, the vitality of this and other spots. This will increase or lessen the estimate placed upon this play, according to the point from which it is viewed. The effort has been to conserve, not to supersede, absorb, or to destroy; also, to round into a single drama the many-sided story of one of the most pathetic figures in kingly history, including the culminating injustice to Mary, Queen of Scots, which time has fixed, ineradicably, among the great judicial crimes of the ages.

A. S.

FIRST PERIOD

CASTE

In the order of their appearance

CARDINAL LORRAINE
MELVIL
DUC DE GUISE
MARY STUART
MARY SETON
CATHERINE DE MEDICI
THROCKMORTON
RIZZIO
DARNLEY
RUTHVEN
DOUGLAS
LINDSAY
GEORGE DOUGLAS
LITTLE DOUGLAS
JANE KENNEDY
SIR AMYAS PAWLET
SIR EDWARD MORTIMER
LORD BURLEIGH
QUEEN ELIZABETH
EARL OF LEICESTER
TALBOT, EARL OF SHREWSBURY
A GUARD
ELSPETH CURLE
BURGOYNE

EXTRA WOMEN, COURTIERS, GUARDS *ad lib.*

*The action of the play begins
in 1560 and ends in 1587*

EPISODE ONE

SCENE:—*A salon in the Château St. Germain. Door L. Lower and upper doors R. Rear, a wide-open door, through which the gardens are seen, all sunlit, and, beyond, above a line of trees, and seen in the distance, the bell-tower of St. Denis. A verandah, on level with salon, and outlined by balustrade, leads from salon to garden. The furnishings of the salon are simple, yet royal.*

DISCOVERED:—*An empty scene, flooded with sunshine.*

AT RISE:—*Enter, on verandah, up Scene, CARDINAL LORRAINE, a tall, lean, typical Guise; brilliant eyes, lowered, now, in deep thought. He stops in doorway C., turns, as if to go on, reconsiders, and enters salon. Again shows indecision, listens. Then he crosses to door L., opens it, listens. He hesitates again; then resolves his problem, returns to door R.U.E., and calls:*

LORRAINE

Paris!

[Enter a Servingman in livery]

Ask Monsieur Melvil to come here!

[The Servingman bows and exits. LORRAINE walks about, pondering tensely.

Enter, from R.U.E., MELVIL. He is twenty-three, at most. A very buoyant personality, in the neat dress of a not rich nobleman.

MELVIL

Your Grace desires to see me?

LORRAINE

Yes, Monsieur!

[Looks observantly at MELVIL, then speaks somewhat at random]

I see my Niece's ladies in the park.
Why is their mistress not with them?

MELVIL

Your Grace,

Her Majesty returned in tears from her
Last visit to King François' tomb.

LORRAINE

I'll go

To her.

MELVIL

Her Majesty, your Grace, is in
The Royal Chapel!

LORRAINE

Grieving still! I fear
Her leaving France will break her heart!

MELVIL

She came
Back from St. Denis more composed than usual;
But, coming on one of the Regent's suite
Who, in the courtyard, was misusing sorely
A handsome palfrey, much incensed, my mistress
Rebuked him roundly; whereupon—

[He stops, hesitating.

LORRAINE

What then?

MELVIL

[Glances cautiously towards door down
L. Lowers his voice]

A lady of the Regent's train came from
Queen Catherine's pavilion—

LORRAINE

Ah, I hope

No angry words were passed?

MELVIL

A few, your Grace;
But with them passed my mistress's resentment.
She would have made amends for her hot speech,
But that the Regent's lady curtly turned
Again, to the pavilion.

[LORRAINE makes a gesture of indignation]

Then, my mistress,
 Much spent with her emotions of the day,
 Dismissed her ladies, and sought reinforcement
 In prayer.

[LORRAINE walks about, his perplexity deepening.]

LORRAINE

MELVIL

LORRAINE

The Regent leaves the Château—when?
 Within the hour, your Grace. Her retinue's
 Already gathering in the courtyard.

She
 Has sent no answer to my message that
 The Cardinal Lorraine would see her, ere
 She goes?

MELVIL

LORRAINE

MELVIL

LORRAINE

MELVIL

LORRAINE

MELVIL

LORRAINE

MELVIL

No, none, your Grace.

Who of her suite

Is in your confidence?

No one, your Grace.

You came to us commended by my sister—

Yes! Madame Guise was benefactor to me,
 And to my brothers.

That alone, Monsieur,
 Should weigh with you to inspire fidelity.
 Your Grace—!

[Moderating his severity, slightly]

Come, Melvil! You are young, and I
 Can make allowance for your youth. Who of
 The Regent's suite is in your confidence?

Be frank! If 'tis some matter of the heart—

[Enter, with paper in hand, from L., the DUC
 DE GUISE. Stands silently, listening.]

I do assure you, there is none, your Grace,

In all the Regent's Court—in petticoats
Or breeches—I'd place faith in. No, not one!

LORRAINE

[*Takes paper, which GUISE hands to
him, glances at it*]

You have some correspondence, I believe,
With England's Embassy?

MELVIL

[*Taken back*]

Why, none, your Grace,

Save that which I, as Secretary to
My Royal Mistress, am obliged to have.

LORRAINE

I must exact, Monsieur, completest candor!

MELVIL

[*Slightly choleric*]

And I beseech your Grace, deal openly
With me.

LORRAINE

I will; as in the past, my brother,
The duc de Guise, and I have ever dealt
With you. Have we not, both, been kind?

MELVIL

Your Grace—

Since I came here to serve her Majesty,
You've covered me with kindnesses.

LORRAINE

We have

Done more—we have entrusted you with secrets
Pertaining to the welfare of our Niece.

MELVIL

Your Grace—

LORRAINE

You know the jealousy that leads
The Medici to wish our Niece away
From France; that of Elizabeth, who fears
Lest Marie's presence in England, even in passing
En route for Scotland, may inflame the people
To hail her, as she is, their rightful Queen.

[*MELVIL would stop him, but he hurries on*]

This fear that gnaws Elizabeth's mean heart
Has led her to refuse safe-conduct to

Our Niece, save on conditions, which forever,
 Thereafter, would exclude her from the throne
 Of England, which Elizabeth now holds,
 Unlawfully.—You know how she, to weaken
 Our Niece's hands, has, in her absence from
 Her kingdom, Scotland, interfered there. She's
 Industrious in intrigue and dissembling;
 Connives, too, with contentious Scottish Lords
 Against my Niece's sovereignty.

GUISE

Ay! Seeing
 Her, by King François' death, replaced by Catherine
 Upon the throne of France, Elizabeth
 Would take advantage of your young Queen's plight
 To force her to renounce the throne of England
 On penalty of barring her from Scotland,
 Which she, then, by some trick would annex to Eng-
 land.

LORRAINE

You know all this, Monsieur, and why our Niece
 Must circumvent her, by at once departing
 For Scotland.

[*Stops MELVIL, again*]

You, the duc de Guise, and I
 Have had the guarding of the knowledge of
 Our plans for her embarkment, on which hangs,
 It may be, even the life of your young Queen—
 Your Grace, I do entreat you—

MELVIL

LORRAINE

Wait, Monsieur—
 This paper now confirms what has been too
 Apparent for some days, that one of us—
 It may be by some trifling indiscretion—
 But one of us who're in the important secret
 Has failed to guard it. We must ascertain,
 Before we can undo the ill effects,

MELVIL What has been done, and who has done it. You
Despatched some hours ago a document
Addressed to the Ambassador of England—
I have the copy of it here!

[*Hands document to LORRAINE*]

As you

Will see, it is a transcript of the letter
Your Grace dictated, and in which the Queen
Refuses, finally, to sign the Treaty
Of Edinburgh, on the ground that it
Involves the sacrifice of Scottish rights.

LORRAINE

[*Having scanned paper, hands it to GUISE*]

You've been in conversation with the Regent,
Who, though in public she displays somewhat
Of softness to your Queen, is, in reality,
Her enemy. I would not trust her in
This vexing controversy 'twixt our Niece
And England.

GUISE

[*Hands paper to LORRAINE, who returns
it to MELVIL*]

No, nor I. Ah, how she hated
To see a girl—a Guise—so supersede her!
Her sorrow at her son's untimely death
Was swallowed in her joy, that she, in turn,
Might take the crown from Marie Stuart.

LORRAINE

[*Listens, eyes on door down R., walks towards it.
Speaks insincerely, loudly*]

Ah,

Our Niece was widowed by the will of God.

[*Opens door, suddenly, looks out. Closes it
again.*]

GUISE

[*Up Scene, walking about. Bitterly*]

Or by slow poison, which the Medicis

So well know how to brew and to administer
To those who bar their way to power!

LORRAINE

Be guarded!

MELVIL

I pray you, give me leave to speak! I have
Had converse with the Regent, who, upon
Three several occasions, has warm urged me
To stay in France—

GUISE

So?

LORRAINE

In her service, Melvil?

MELVIL

Even so, your Grace.

GUISE

Your answer?

MELVIL

I could make
But one: 'Twas Madame Guise sent me from Scot-
land
To serve your Niece, the Dauphine, then, of
France—

[*Almost in tears*]

And serve her Majesty I will, your Grace,
So long as I have life! I said so, straight,
To the Queen Regent, as I tell it now.
Thanks, Melvil! That relieves my heart.

LORRAINE

And mine!

GUISE

MELVIL

I do

Assure your Graces—both—your confidence
Restored, much eases mine.

LORRAINE

Still, we must probe

This matter. Tell me—You've been careful not
To name the port from which the galleys sail?
So careful that I have misnamed it, strongly.
In talking with a member of the staff
Of the Ambassador from England, I
Laid stress upon the preference the Queen

MELVIL

Expressed, continually, to stay in France;
 But, if she sails, to leave by way of Havre.
 LORRAINE Ah? Excellent!—if he to whom you spoke
 Believed it, which I doubt.

GUISE

The policy
 Of Lord Throckmorton would be quick to point
 His nose to Calais, if you spoke of Havre!

[*Up Scene, beyond the railing of loggia,
 MARY'S ladies, accompanied by courtiers,
 one with a lute, stroll from L. to R., laugh-
 ing, coquetting.*

MELVIL

Your Grace, I sent out to the Port of Havre
 Some false despatches to give colour of truth
 To other news which I have set afloat;
 To wit: My Royal Mistress is resolved
 To sail a month hence.

LORRAINE

Now we have the secret!
 Go, Melvil, and recall to Madame Medici
 We wait her pleasure.

[*To GUISE*]

She is ill-disposed
 To recognize the Princes of the Church
 As having right to summon her to audience!

[*GUISE shrugs his shoulders. To MELVIL*]
 Remind your Mistress that the hour is here
 For Madame Medici's departure.

MELVIL

Yes,
 Your Grace.

[*Turns to go. LORRAINE recalls him.*

LORRAINE

And set a watch upon the highroad,
 And bring us word at once of the approach
 Of Lord Throckmorton's suite.

MELVIL

My Lord is coming

Here? Will his Queen relent and send safe-conduct?

LORRAINE

That's to be hoped for; yet not likely. Go!

[MELVIL turns up C.]

But to the Regent, first.

[MELVIL turns, exits down R. To GUISE,
who walks about]

Our zealous Melvil

In placing thus the date so far away,

And with particularity, has roused

Suspicion of our actual plan to put

To sea, at once.

GUISE

We must effect that end

Before a larger fleet is gathered, that

May oppose the Royal galleys' sailing. From

The information now at hand, my Lord

Concludes we have been lying as to Havre.

Now, if we change our story, he'll suspect

That we again are lying as to Calais.

He will, at least, spread out the fleet now lurking

About that port—if what the fishermen

There say is true.

MELVIL

[Re-enters from down R.]

The Regent sends her compliments;

Also this word: Her Majesty will walk

Soon in the Park, where, if your Grace will follow,

She'll talk with you.

LORRAINE

The upstart! To the last

She would humiliate the house of Guise!

[Laughter heard, off Scene, up R., of
ladies and courtiers]

Go, Melvil! Set about informing all

Who'll make the journey with our Niece, and those

Especially who travel but to Calais,
That they no more make mystery of route
Or destination. Let them talk of both
Quite freely; and with much pretended secrecy
Do you despatch a courier to Havre
To announce the Queen's departure at that Port.
At once, your Grace.

MELVIL

GUISE

And let your "secrecy"

Be so obtrusive as to force itself
Upon the attention of the curious.

MELVIL

I will, your Grace! Trust me!

[Laughing, exits L. Sounds of mirth and music up Scene off R. increase. GUISE looks off.]

GUISE

Our Niece's ladies!

SETON

[Heard outside, R. Calling]

Her Majesty at last!

VOICES

[In chorus, calling eagerly]

Your Majesty!

GUISE

Our Niece is coming.

[Enter, on loggia, from L., MARY, carrying her Book of Hours. Enter from R. an eager throng of women and courtiers, hurrying to meet her.]

VOICES

Oh, your Majesty!

MARY

[To SETON, who would take her book; waving all back]

No, no! Go back!—Go, all of you! Enjoy
The hours of sunshine that remain, and those
Blue skies! I would not have you lose a cloud—
A single, changing cloud that floats off yonder!
Each memory you take away with you
Will, by and by, gleam golden, in grey Scotland.

Go! Roam among the flowers! Go! laugh, and sing—
 You, Fleming, cull me some of those late roses;
 And, Brantôme, play a *chanson* on your lute—
 Go—all of you! Drink in deep breaths of those
 Green woods!—

[*Group moves away, R., reluctantly. BRANTÔME strumming on his lute. MARY looks after them, wistfully*]

Ah, France! My country! Can it be
 That I must leave you? Oh, how can I—

LORRAINE

Marie!

GUISE

Come, Marie!

MARY

[*Turns, weeping on LORRAINE'S breast*]

Uncle! Uncle!

LORRAINE

[*Soothes her. Faint, plaintive lute music, distant*]

So, the last
 Hard parting has been made from François?

MARY

Must

It really be the last?

LORRAINE

Come, come! The time

Is past for weeping.

GUISE

You, who are a Guise—

And Stuart—

LORRAINE

Your salt tears add sweetness to
 The triumph of the Medici; besides,
 Henceforth, your watchword must be: "Forward"!

MARY

"Forward"?

Can I cry forward, when fate sends me back
 To Scotland—

LORRAINE

Tut, tut—

MARY

Land of barren moors,
 Of gloomy, silent lakes 'mong rugged mountains—

And then—the rugged people! Kilted courtiers—
 Bagpipes, instead of lutes and harpsichords,
 And porridge in the place of pretty pastry!
 I dread the journey worse than death!

GUISE
 MARY

Come, Marie!

You say that, Uncle, who have never been there!
 Why! I recall those rough and angry seas
 I crossed to come to France, my mother's country,
 With gratitude! As they were gates let down
 Between me and the gloomiest of childhoods!
 Ah, when I think of that bare monastery
 Set on a lonely island, where I was
 Immured for years—the only love I knew
 Came from the hearts of my four Marys, yonder,
 Now laughing happily as maidens should;
 Then, helpless children, 'prisoned there with me
 To while away my tedium! Why, dear Uncles,
 Until I came to France I never knew
 What love—or freedom—no, nor sunshine meant!
 As I look back at it, it seems as if
 All life in Scotland were a cold bleak prison!
 For you it was a prison, child! Your mother
 Had need to guard you closely, against Henry,
 Who feared, as does Elizabeth, his daughter,
 Your claim upon the English crown; and sought,
 When other plots fell down, to effect his purpose
 By marriage 'twixt you and his sickly son.
 I recollect that, clearly. I was five
 When the Ambassador came in to view
 The Royal wares he was employed to buy!
 He wished to prove me sound, and whole; for some,
 It seemed, had spread report that I was humped
 And crooked as the English Richard!

LORRAINE

MARY

- GUISE Ah,
- The *canaille!*
- MARY So, my mother stripped me, held me
All squirming and protesting lustily.
I, somehow, did not take to English phizzes!
- GUISE [Joins in her laughter]
Ah, thanks to Mary Guise, he failed in all
His plots!
- LORRAINE As, thanks to Mary Stuart, her daughter,
His spawn, Elizabeth, will fail in hers!
- MARY Yes—but I want no needless struggles! I'll
Not press my claims, unless Elizabeth
Obliges it; but she, they say, has made
A vow she will not wed. Be that as may be,
Until we know each other, she mistrusts me!—
Once I am safe in Scotland, I shall seek
Some cousinly arrangement with her—that
If she'll proclaim me heir, we'll set these differences
At rest.—Be sure I shall be diplomatic!
- LORRAINE You think you can be so? Ah, Marie, if
You'd be a diplomat, you must first learn
To hold your impulses in rein.
- MARY Why, Uncle—
- LORRAINE But, I'll admit, you've ever had a wise
Head on young shoulders! You, who ruled so
proudly
In France, have borne humiliation from
The Regent, since—with tact and gentleness.
But, come! She leaves St. Germain in the hour;
Whereafter, we must leave for Calais.
- MARY Oh,
Not yet! It is too soon!

GUISE

If we delay

'Twill be too late. Affairs in Scotland are
Too serious.

MARY

Uncle! What a fate to be

A Queen! My crown's a magnet, as it seems,
To draw about me malice—treachery,
And rouse cupidity 'mong those who envy!
I'd rather be the Queen of Poetry
Among the flowers of France—

LORRAINE

You have no choice!

You are the Queen of Scotland, and allied
With every throne in Europe—

MARY

But I'm going

Away from you!

LORRAINE

Tut, tut, my child, there's naught

To harm you! Scotland is not far from France
When seas are free. By letter, or commission,
By every sail that flutters from our port
You shall have word—

MELVIL

[Enter, MELVIL, from L.
Your Grace—your Majesty—

A courier, preceding the Ambassador,
Has just arrived with these despatches.

*[Hands despatches to LORRAINE, who reads
addresses.]*

LORRAINE

Ah—?

“Her Majesty, the Queen of Scotland!”—for
The Regent—

*[Gives despatch to MELVIL, who exits down L.
with it.]*

MARY

*[Reads her despatch, hands it to others,
to read]*

He requests an audience with me—

But he says nothing of safe-conduct! Oh,
Elizabeth will never let me go
To Scotland till I sign the Treaty.

GUISE

Never!

Let nothing ever tempt you, Marie, to it!

MARY

[*Dubious, as LORRAINE studies despatch*]

But was not Henry, father of my François,
A party to the making of it?

GUISE

Yes!

MARY

He always loved me, truly. Would he draw
A treaty that could harm me?

LORRAINE

Far from it!

He meant to enlarge your rights, not to curtail them!

He builded on poor François' life—alas!

Now, all's reversed; his death dissolves the Treaty.

GUISE

What's more, you could not sign a paper that
Involves the rights of Scotland, without conference
In person with your Parliament.

MARY

But how

Am I to have it, if Elizabeth
Refuses a safe-conduct?

LORRAINE

You must show

Yourself superior to lawless threats!

I tell you her demand is subterfuge

To hide a base cupidity!

MARY

Ah, well—

GUISE

It is absurd to ask your signature
To papers drawn when you were Queen of France,
Of which you are no longer part, or subject!

MARY

Ah, Uncle! That's the saddest thought of all!
I am a part of France—France part of me
Who am descended from a hundred Kings.
Who ruled here—

[Almost imperceptibly, door down R. opens, as Scene proceeds.]

GUISE

Very true; but that's another
Good reason for your going. There is no
Room for you, now, in France, where erstwhile shop-
keepers
Of Florence sit securely in the saddle!

[The face of CATHERINE seen in slightly opened door, down R. Expression of tightening hatred]

LORRAINE

A curse upon the breed of Medicis!
How long, oh Lord, how long?

[Enter, with royal sweep, from down R., CATHERINE, her face wreathed in smiles, veiling her triumph, and sarcasm. She looks not at all at GUISE and LORRAINE, but goes to MARY, who rises from settle, to greet her.]

CATHERINE
LORRAINE

Ma chère—

Your Majesty—

[Bows, draws up Scene. GUISE, the same after speech.]

GUISE

Your Majesty—

CATHERINE

[To MARY. Her hypocrisy apparent under smiles]

In tears again, ma chère?

MARY

It is at sight of you, your Majesty,
My François' mother!

CATHERINE

Ah, these earthly partings
Are sad! I, too, must leave you, very shortly.

MARY

Oh, I'm heartbroken!

CATHERINE

[Sits on settle, with MARY]

How I wish I might

Go some leagues farther with you. But, you know
Affairs most urgent call me back to Court.
I must revive the pageant in which you,
Ma chère, so dazzled everyone!

MARY

Alas,
Your Majesty, I have forgotten pageants!
I have forgotten everything, of late.
Forgive my tears! It is no pleasant prospect
To leave the land I love and go to face
The strangers who, though they're my subjects,
seem,
From all I hear of them, like enemies.

CATHERINE
MARY

The English Queen is of your kindred—
[*Up Scene LORRAINE and GUISE show anger*]
Yes—

CATHERINE

You know how I regard the English, one
And all! I'll never be content until
I've driven every one of them from France!
[*Enter MELVIL, L. He bows to the Queens, in
turn, then turns up, after speech to LOR-
RAINE and GUISE.*]

MELVIL

Your Majesty—your Majesty! My Lord
Ambassador from England has arrived.

MARY

The emissary of my ardent enemy!

CATHERINE

[*Laughing*]
Were you a Medici you'd have no enemies.

MARY

Ah, how avoid them?

CATHERINE

Very simply, Marie!
Destroy them!

MARY

Oh, your Majesty!

CATHERINE

It is
The one safe way. Dead enemies are harmless.

[Rises, as LORRAINE and GUISE come down,
MELVIL with them. To MELVIL]

My Lord Throckmorton has requested audience;
But I must take a last look at the Park—

[To MARY]

I have in mind a fête that must be planned.
If you, ma chère—

[Casually, to LORRAINE]

your Grace—have business with

My Lord, precede me with him. I'll return
Anon.

[Sweeps up Scene, to C. Exits, turning R.]

LORRAINE

[To MELVIL]

I'll see my Lord Ambassador—

[To MARY]

And you?

MARY

Pray see him first. I must compose
Myself, by going apart awhile. I will
Return at once.

[She exits, R.U.E. MELVIL exits L., but re-
turns, ushering in THROCKMORTON. He is
a self-important, blunt, overbearing Saxon
type.]

LORRAINE

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur!

GUISE

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur—

THROCKMORTON

[To first one, and then the other. Bad French]

Messieurs, bon jour!

Your Grace—your Grace. It's rumoured in the city
The Queen of Scotland's leaving soon for Havre.

[GUISE and LORRAINE exchange a glance,
which he sees.]

LORRAINE

An error, Monsieur. She will sail from Calais.

GUISE

Will you be seated?

THROCKMORTON

[Sits without thanking him. To LORRAINE]

So she sails, your Grace?

LORRAINE

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, allow me, first,
As one entitled by my cloth to speak—
What is the purpose of your visit to
St. Germain? Does your Queen, at last, withdraw
Her opposition to our Niece's passage
To Scotland?

THROCKMORTON

No, your Grace; nor will she, till
The Treaty, which I've brought again with me,
[Draws out document. Very voluminous]
Is signed—in full—by Mary, Queen of Scotland.
I am instructed by our Queen to state it
In plainest language.

LORRAINE

Yours could not be plainer,
Monsieur l'Ambassadeur!

GUISE

Nor more barbaric.
This ultimatum is an insult! It
Is mere abuse of power!

LORRAINE

Her action is
Unprecedented, as between two princes!
To bar the peaceful passage of a Queen
To her own kingdom—

THROCKMORTON

It will not be barred
By Queen Elizabeth, if Mary Stuart
Will ratify the Treaty.

GUISE

Never!

LORRAINE

Never!

GUISE

This is the barg'ning of a robber chief
Holding his victim at a ruinous ransom!

THROCKMORTON

Our Queen, your Grace of Guise, pretends no taste
For fashion, even of speech—

GUISE

They are not wanting
Who say your Queen "pretends" in everything!

LORRAINE

[*Restraining GUISE*]

Your Queen would have our Niece resign her rights—
Those she was born to—on the penalty
Of suffering exile?

GUISE

Does your Queen want war?
It is but two years since Elizabeth's
Half-sister challenged France, and, for her pains,
Lost Calais!

THROCKMORTON

Do you threaten us, your Grace?
In which case France, in turn, may lose that port—
It is of little consequence to us.
Our fleet, however, is not what it was;
And we are not alarmed at talk of war!

[*CATHERINE, smiling, appears on loggia. LORRAINE, to GUISE and THROCKMORTON, interposing.*]

LORRAINE

Enough, monsieur l'Ambassadeur. Henri—
The Regent is returning.

[*Enter, CATHERINE, up C.*]

Madame—

GUISE

Madame!

THROCKMORTON

[*Presses past the GUISES, to CATHERINE.*][*Fawning, throughout scene*]

Your Majesty—I'm charmed I come in time.
I understand you leave the Château soon?

CATHERINE

[*Continues, throughout, her smiles*]

Today, Monsieur!

THROCKMORTON

So soon! But I'm in time
On the behalf of my most gracious Queen
To offer you my homage—

CATHERINE

Thanks, Monsieur—

I trust you are the bearer of good news?
Perhaps the long withheld safe-conduct for
The Queen of Scotland?

THROCKMORTON

Majesty—that question,

As I have been explaining to Messieurs,
Still hangs upon the signing of the Treaty.

GUISE

It hangs, my Lord, upon the English Queen's
Intention to wrest from our Niece her rights.

LORRAINE

[*Snaps his finger almost in THROCK-
MORTON'S face*]

GUISE

As for your Queen's safe-conduct, that for it!
My Lord, our Niece leaves France when it shall please
her:

And she shall never sign away her rights
To England's crown, her lawful heritage.

THROCKMORTON

[*As CATHERINE looks on, amused*]

Your Grace insists she has a claim on it,
But that's a question still to be decided.

GUISE

In England, possibly; but in the minds
Of European Kings and of the Pope,
It has been settled.

THROCKMORTON

Well, your Grace, possession
Decides it. Queen Elizabeth is Queen
By virtue of her father's will. Were one
Acclaimed, as is your Niece, free, now, to pass
Among our people, what seditions might
Arise? Why, on this subject, they're already
Too wide divided!

LORRAINE

Ah, my Lord, that statement
Exposes the true basis of your fears.

[*To CATHERINE*]

Your pardon, Madame—the Ambassador
Would speak with you—

[Up Scene, with GUISE, and apart, on the loggia.]

THROCKMORTON I'm sure your Majesty
Can understand my Queen's dilemma. She
Is much embarrassed by this conflict with
Queen Mary Stuart.

CATHERINE [Plays with him, though he does not see it]
Ah, it troubles her?

THROCKMORTON Your Majesty knows well of what the Guises
Are capable.

CATHERINE Oh, pardon! Let us not
Mix things, Monsieur!

THROCKMORTON Your pardon, Majesty—
Of course, if it is true—as Rumour says,
Your Majesty intends to make a marriage
Between the widow and your next son, Charles,
Now minor King—

CATHERINE Monsieur! Your Rumour's English,
Or Huguenot, for, were he French, and Catholic,
As we are, he would more respect our laws,
Which call such unions mere licentious lust.
That question is, at least, disposed of quickly.

THROCKMORTON Your Majesty, it's settled, as you say.
I understand the Queen of Scotland sails
From Calais.

CATHERINE So? And when will she arrive
In Scotland?

THROCKMORTON That, your Majesty, depends—
[LORRAINE and GUISE on loggia. He
lowers his voice]

But on it hangs my reason for requesting
An audience with your Majesty.

CATHERINE Ah?

THROCKMORTON

Madame,

If I am blunt, forgive me; but I know
Your time is short—

CATHERINE

Go on, my Lord—

THROCKMORTON

My Royal Mistress is concerned to know
Your Majesty's opinion on the matter
Of this vexatious Treaty.

CATHERINE

Pray, Monsieur—

THROCKMORTON

My Mistress much desires close friendship 'twixt
Her realm and yours—

CATHERINE

I have had proof of it.

She has shown it by pursuing, here, the policy
She has pursued in Scotland. Wait, Monsieur—
Has she not sent there emissaries to
Undo the faith of Scottish Catholics? Sent
Reformers here, to France, to stimulate
The Huguenots?

THROCKMORTON

'Tis calumny!

CATHERINE

I hope so.

THROCKMORTON

Well, Madame, may I ask, with due respect,
What attitude you take in this sad quarrel
Between your late son's widow and our Queen?

CATHERINE

[Playing with him again, all smiles]

'Tis not within my province to incline
Towards one Queen, or the other.

THROCKMORTON

But, Madame—

If you would tell me—confidentially—
Suppose the Queen of England were obliged
To intercept upon the seas, the Queen
Of Scotland—if, indeed, she risk the voyage—
Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, you spread your nets
In vain. I am an equal friend to both

CATHERINE

The Queens, and will not interfere between them.

[*Turns, to dismiss him.*

THROCKMORTON And yet, your Majesty—one moment—were
A circumstance to arise, in which the Queen,
My Mistress, were to seize the Queen of Scotland,
Would France to war on that account?

CATHERINE

In this,
France will have naught to do. Come, come, my Lord!
Desist! It is not seemly we should hold
More discourse on this subject.

[*LORRAINE enters from loggia, crosses to
R.U.E., and is about to knock, but MARY
enters. They converse up Scene, earnestly,
MARY glancing down towards CATHERINE.*

CATHERINE *lowers her voice.* To
THROCKMORTON]

If you must
Continue to debate the sorry question,
'Twere better to address the Queen direct
Whom it concerns. But, mark you, France is not
Committed, in the least—in any way!

[*Raises voice*]

So I will say, Adieu, Monsieur—

[*THROCKMORTON bows himself away, L.,
stands, watching. LORRAINE and GUISE
turn from him, coming down. MARY, com-
ing down, meets CATHERINE.*

THROCKMORTON

Adieu,

Your Majesty!

CATHERINE

[*To MARY, kissing her*]

Ma chère! Adieu!

[*To LORRAINE and GUISE*]

Adieu,
Your Grace! You stay in France; you shall have audi-
ence

On some occasion, later. Adieu, Marie!

MARY

[Would cling to her]

Adieu—Oh, no! I cannot bear it! I

Would rather stay in France—a hundred times.

CATHERINE

[Presses MARY to her. Dissembling]

Adieu, ma chère! Adieu! Adieu! Adieu!—

*[Turns, pretends to be overcome; hurried exit,
down R.]*

MARY

[Looks after her, curiously, through tears]

Adieu—

THROCKMORTON

[Approaches MARY. Very businesslike]

Your Majesty—

MARY

*[Drying her eyes. GUISE and LORRAINE
retire to loggia]*

My Lord Throckmorton—

You would have audience with me. Pardon me,
I was forgetting—

THROCKMORTON

'Tis about the Treaty.

MARY

[Smiles through tears]

My Lord—the Treaty? 'Tis the only subject,
I think, on which I ever hear from England.
When François died, your Lord of Bedford came
With consolations from your Queen, and he
Began as you have done: "Your Majesty—
About that Treaty!"

THROCKMORTON

Madame, 'tis a subject

That may be ended by a simple stroke
Upon a bit of parchment.

MARY

But that stroke

I'll never make, my Lord. My answer's final.

THROCKMORTON Oh, very well, Madame. And so you mean
To take the boat at Calais?

MARY Calais—? Surely!

THROCKMORTON You will defy the Queen of England, then?

MARY Who is the so-called Queen of England, to
Decree the going out and coming in
To her own kingdom of the Queen of Scotland?

THROCKMORTON [*Cannot answer. Takes another turn;
another short stop*]

Come, Madame, once for all! Do you insist
Upon this claim? You still refuse to sign
Renunciation of it? Do you?

MARY Yes,

My Lord! By every law my claim is just.
Born lawfully, derived from Royal Stuarts,
I am the natural Queen of England; she
Who reigns, the natural daughter of King Henry.

THROCKMORTON Beware, Madame—

MARY I speak the truth—

[*LORRAINE and GUISE cross the loggia, listen,
astonished.*]

THROCKMORTON I tell you—

LORRAINE [*Swings down C., followed by GUISE*]

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, your tone is not
The one in which my Niece, a Royal Lady,
May safely be addressed.

GUISE Do you presume
To threaten Mary Stuart?

[*MARY interposes.*]

MARY He presumed—

But I am sure my Lord regrets it— Leave us—

[*GUISE and LORRAINE return to loggia,
exit from it slowly*]

My Lord Ambassador, be seated. I've
 No wish to anger you, or speak in malice—
 I state such facts as all men, freely, know.
 But I'd not wound your Queen. I'll be content,
 As I've already said, and many times,
 To wait, if she will name me her successor.

THROCKMORTON

That is impossible. My Queen would never
 Consent to listen to such talk. Why, Madame,
 Would you have her live on, a winding sheet
 Perpetually before her eyes?

MARY

My Lord,

She speaks quite frequently of epitaphs!
 Has she not chos'n her own on which she'd be
 Described as Virgin queen? her only Spouse
 Her people? I, my Lord, when in my cradle
 Was sacredly anointed as the Queen;
 My claims, therefore, are just. And yet, my Lord,
 I'll say no more of them. I ask, as is
 The common right of all, the privilege
 Of passing through your country into mine,
 That I may meet my ministers of State,
 Confer with them on many important matters.

THROCKMORTON

I dare say! That reminds me of a point
 My Royal Mistress is in mind to settle.
 She fears that you intend to make all Scotland
 Turn papist?

MARY

As all England was, a few
 Short years ago? Why, this, my Lord, is meddling!
 What! would your Queen, refusing me safe-conduct
 Through England, now presume to write our
 prayers?
 My Lord, my subjects will be free to serve their God

As pleases them. But I'm a Catholic,
 And baptized in the faith; so shall I live,
 So shall I die. My subjects are as free—
 Ah, very good—

THROCKMORTON
 MARY

Oh—thank you! But your Queen,
 We hear, is not so liberal as that
 She may exact such promise from me. It
 Is even said that she dissembles her
 True faith. She makes laws 'gainst the papists,
 who,
 Encouraged in times past to live in England,
 Have trusted to its justice; but, 'tis said,
 She hides a crucifix within her closet.
 Mine—

[*Takes crucifix up, kisses it*]

I wear openly. But, that point's settled.
 Come! what of the safe-conduct?

THROCKMORTON

'Twill be issued

MARY

When you have signed the Treaty. Otherwise—
 Yes?—otherwise?

THROCKMORTON

Well, Madame, otherwise—
 You leave France at a risk.

MARY

Of what, my Lord?

THROCKMORTON

[*After a moment*]

Well, Madame, I have given you the message
 Transmitted by the Queen, my Royal Mistress.
 I've nothing more to say on her behalf.
 But, if you'll state your answer—finally,
 And ratify the Treaty—

MARY

My Lord,
 It is impossible that I proceed
 Without the counsel of the lords and nobles
 Of my own realm, to have which I must go

Among them. This, in numerous ways, I have
 Reiterated to you. Come, my Lord!
 What lies behind the signing of this treaty
 Which may, in any way, work prejudice
 To Queen Elizabeth's affairs? Be open!
 Some cogent reasons—not apparent in
 Your presentation of your Queen's demands—
 There must be for her strange behaviour to me.

THROCKMORTON My Queen's displeasure rises wholly from
 Your own ill will, which will not ratify
 The Treaty made at Edinburgh.

MARY

Then,
 My Lord, I pray you, act as may become
 An honourable Minister, whose part
 It is to make things better between princes
 Who disagree, rather than worse. Convey
 This message to your Queen—my final one:
 The Treaty, as 'twas made, involved the name
 Of François, King of France. He, now, is dead—
 I have no power to meet Elizabeth's will.
 I cannot change the charters that were made
 By François, acting as the King of France.
 Nor can I, as your Queen exacts, as part
 Of this same Treaty, bind, deliver to her,
 French Bishops, whom she seeks to punish.

THROCKMORTON

So,
 You still refuse to ratify the Treaty?
 I do, my Lord.

MARY

THROCKMORTON

Then, Madame, as I said,
 You sail at your own risk.

MARY

I'll sail, my Lord.
 I shall at once embark for Scotland; trust
 To the one Judge above to take me safely.

I pray the winds will be so favouring
 That I need, nowhere, touch the English coast;
 But if I do, and if Elizabeth
 Should seize me, why, again, I'll trust to God!
 And now, my Lord—your audience is ended.

[Turns up Scene, where, on threshold, LORRAINE stands, alone. THROCKMORTON looks after her; infuriated, he clenches his fist; then rushes suddenly for door, L., exits, slamming it after him.]

MARY

[To LORRAINE, while looking over sunlit Gardens of St. Germain]

So, Uncle, I am ready! I will go!
 Dear France, I feel I never more shall see you;
 But I will go, leaving you half myself—
 My two dear treasures: François, and my mother,
 Asleep, both of them, in your breast. Adieu—!

CURTAIN

EPISODE TWO

SCENE:—*Queen's Cabinet at HOLYROOD.*

TIME:—*Early evening.*

AT RISE:—*MARY SETON comes down spiral staircase, and hurries to the top of descending stairs, calling.*

Sébastien!

[*A Valet's head appears above the lower stairs*]

Fais vite le souper! Nous

Aurons, ce soir, six couverts! Allez! Allez!

[*Valet exits down stairs.*]

Enter, MELVIL, a big, debonnaire Saxon; a politic, but honest courtier, a bit sly in his enquiries.

Good even, Mistress Seton!

Oh, Monsieur!—

Oh, pardon! All our people, being French—
Is't you, at last, Sir Melvil? You've returned
From England?

But a few hours since. I sent
Apprisement of my coming to the Queen.

The French Ambassador is with her, Sir.
But if you'll sit a moment, I will tell her.

I passed the Banquet Hall as I came here.
'Twas lighted, brilliantly.

His Grace the King
Is feasting with the Lords; her Majesty,
As 'twere, being in retirement just now.

I understand in preparation for
A Royal heir?—'Tis true, then? Well, thank God!

And yet, the King looked not so happy, Mistress.
He was in converse with Red Douglas.

SETON

Sir,

His Grace, of late, hath been ill-tempered! He
Is blust'ry as those winds that roar without!

MELVIL

'Tis gossiped he complains the Queen will not
Appease him with the interview he seeks?

SETON

Nor will she, Sir, until he mends his manners!

MELVIL

Ah, so?

SETON

Her Majesty is true offended
Against his Grace.

MELVIL

Nay, Mistress, that news grieves me.

SETON

The King has ceased to woo, Sir, being married.

He is no longer the assiduous Consort,

But violently jealous of Madame

And every man she looks at—even poor Rizzio,

Whose one fault is that he can sing so well!

The Queen, as you know, loves sweet music. Sir—

I can say this to you, in confidence—

The King's a slave to vices I'd not name!

MELVIL

He's young; unused to being King.

SETON

And headstrong—

He's tossed about, a very plaything in the hands

Of these rough Lords. Why, Sir, he'd like to wield

Her sceptre! But—I will now to the Queen,

To announce you.

[Exits into MARY'S room, up R., reached by two steps. MELVIL takes package of documents from pocket, examines them. Enter, RIZZIO, very white, nervous, constrained. He is small, exquisite, but extremely plain, almost ugly. MELVIL rises, putting out his hand, cordially.]

MELVIL

Signor Rizzio!

RIZZIO

Ah, Signore!

Her Majesty will be enchanted. Ah,
Despatches for the Queen?

MELVIL

[*Giving letters to RIZZIO*]

Which I deliver

Direct to you, her foreign Secretary.
You seem disturbed, Sir. You're not ill, I trust?

RIZZIO

Not in the body, Signor', but 'tis here—

[*Touches temples*]

Strange things have happened since you left for Eng-
land.

I was, then, in the King's close confidence.
You know, Signore, it was I who urged
Her Majesty to choose Lord Darnley, who,
Though young, seemed finely minded.—For some
reason

The King has turned against me.

MELVIL

That were wrong.

You did, indeed, induce the Queen to raise
Him to his present dignity, as Consort—

RIZZIO

I meant to act well—I meant well, Signore—

Yes, as God hears me, I meant but to serve him—

Yet, more to serve her Majesty, to whom

I owe my all. But now, Sir, now he's King—

MELVIL

Will you not sit, Sir? You are pale. What is
It troubles you, Signore?

RIZZIO

I am weak,

And terrified—I own it! I have been
Within the day with one who prophesies
My death, Sir, by foul means, and I have been,
Of late, oft threatened—

MELVIL

Every man is so
Whom Royalty confides in.

RIZZIO

But, Sir Melvil—

MELVIL

Trust me, the Scots are very quick to threaten,
Yet slow, in general, to act.

[Enter SETON. MELVIL signs to RIZZIO to re-
strain himself before her.

SETON

The Queen
Desires you, Sir, to enter. You, Signore,
Would best attend her Majesty. There is
Some correspondence to be done, with Spain—

[RIZZIO exits, after MELVIL, into QUEEN'S
room. As QUEEN'S door closes, enter
DARNLEY. Younger, by five years, than
MARY. He is flushed, clearly under the in-
fluence of drink.

DARNLEY

Well, Mistress, is the Queen disposed to see
The King this even?

SETON

The Queen, your Grace, just now,
Holds audience.

DARNLEY

With her Secretary, Rizzio?

SETON

Her Secretary's with her Majesty.

DARNLEY

I knew it!

[Darts from room, exits, down R.

SETON

In his cups again! Poor Madame!
What trials for one brought up as she was! What
A rage he is in, this time! I'll go in—
He shall not vent it on poor Mary Seton!

[Exits into QUEEN'S room. As she opens door,
sound of lute heard, and a soft tenor voice
singing. Ere door is fully closed, enter,
precipitately, DARNLEY, followed by RED
DOUGLAS, RUTHVEN, and another.

DARNLEY

I say it is ten thousand crimes I must
Endure to see this primping foreign upstart
Preferred to me! Upon the least occasion
They chatter French, while he gabs rhymes to her,
Or bawls Italian ditties!

DOUGLAS

Let's to business!

DARNLEY

She claps him when he bleats, and even, herself,
Twangs on the viol for him! Listen!

DOUGLAS

It is well known our honest fiddlers and
Our pipers furnish Madame with amusement
Of quite another sort!

[*Faint applause heard in QUEEN'S room.*]

DARNLEY

You hear, my Lords?

They are laughing! She is making merry with them,
Believing I, her husband, feast elsewhere!
Her Majesty has time for favourites,
Yet, for two days, her valet, Paris—or
That damned Sébastien—or her Mistress Seton
Have barred my way whenever I have sought
A word with my own lawful wife! And yet,
My Lords, 'tis not her doing, I would swear it;
She's counselled to it by the Secretary.
He interferes, my Lords, with everything
In Scotland; keeps the Queen from crowning me
As I should be crowned—as François, her spouse
Before me, was crowned! I am Stuart, too!
And after Mary, rightful heir to England.
True! true!

RUTHVEN

DARNLEY

But helpless, while this foreign fellow,

Her Secretary—of the Muses, lives!

DOUGLAS

His Grace the King is right. This Rizzio has
By far too great an influence upon
Her Majesty.

DARNLEY

Well, then?—What, then, my Lords?
You've given me your word. Will you remove
him?

DOUGLAS

My Lords, I'm with the young King—but on one
Condition. Ruthven—Carew—we have all
Agreed upon it.

DARNLEY

Name it, then; but hasten!

DOUGLAS

That you, being rid of Rizzio, my Lord,
Whose influence with the Queen is perilous,
Once power is in your hands to issue edicts,
Will pardon Murray, my half-brother and
The Queen's, and all his followers with him; all
Who have been banished by the Queen, and pine
In England.

DARNLEY

Murray plots there with Elizabeth,
Even as he did in Scotland, 'gainst the Queen.
He's too ambitious; and Elizabeth
Sees in me, too, no less than in your Queen,
A rival! Oh, well, what you like! I promise—

DOUGLAS

[Takes out a paper, spreads it on table]

Good!

RUTHVEN

Very good!

DOUGLAS

We'll take your signature,
Your Grace, to that agreement.

DARNLEY

[Hesitates, then signs recklessly]

There! 'tis signed.

Now, gentlemen, preliminaries being
Arranged, we meet tomorrow to conclude
Our plans. We will appoint each one his part.
You've chosen your weapon, Douglas? Ruthven?
Carew?

[As he is named, each one draws his weapon.]

*As they do so, the door opens suddenly, and
MARY enters, stops on threshold.*

MARY So, Darnley—you, my Lords, presume to hold
A secret council in my cabinet?

DARNLEY I will explain—

MARY 'Tis useless, Sir. I am
Informed of what you plot to do, my Lords,
But I will seek and find the remedy!

[She re-enters her room. The door closes, audibly. Momentary silence.]

DOUGLAS Your Grace, if what we plot is known to Madame,
Our game is one of life and death. 'Tis not
The cleverest will win here, but the quickest!
What we've to do must be accomplished now;
If not, we die tomorrow! All of us!
I'm ready, Douglas.

RUTHVEN
DARNLEY

And I'm ready!

[Rushes to QUEEN'S door, tries it]

Locked!

DOUGLAS And Rizzio is with her! By my soul—
'Twere better so. Let's wait without, and get
Him later as he leaves the Palace. Deeds
Such as we do are not for women's eyes.
DARNLEY By God! I'll strike her Majesty, through him!
I'll have it done, and well done, in her presence!
RUTHVEN Your Grace, we will accomplish all you'd have us!
But let us out, first, find the men who are
Engaged to help us.

[They exit, through curtained door, down R.]

SETON, a moment later, opens QUEEN'S
door, peeps out.

SETON

Madame! They are gone!

[Enter, on MELVIL'S arm, MARY. Behind her]

RIZZIO *with the FRENCH AMBASSADOR, deep in conversation; also, CAMDEN, a silent member of the party. They come down towards table.*

MARY

Go, bid Sébastien bring the supper in.

[SETON *exits down stairs. Thereafter, as conversation proceeds, SÉBASTIEN enters with jugs, goblets, etc., and proceeds to set the supper on the table*]

Be seated, gentlemen. Go on, Sir Melvil;
You were about to tell the latest jest
In London.

MELVIL

Madame, gentlemen! The jest
Concerns a lady—

MARY

Naturally! Go on!

MELVIL

This lady, as a proof of her regard,
Bestowed on Oxford University
A pair of shoes that once encased her feet—

[RIZZIO *and FRENCH AMBASSADOR exchange glances.*

SETON *returns, sits at table, amused, listens.*

MARY

How generous!

MELVIL

The very word, Madame,
To fit the case. If rumour's true, they'd fit
A man—well, say—about my size!

[*All laugh except RIZZIO.*

MARY

'Twere well

The lady's gauge in everything were measured
By those same feet! Her head's depository,
I'm told, of learning most unusual.—Melvil,
While we are waiting, please the company
By telling them, as you have told to me,

The items of your earlier mission to
Elizabeth.

[*To FRENCH AMBASSADOR*]

'Tis most amusing! Mind you tell it to
My uncle Guise when you return to France!
'Twas after I had routed the old Earl
Of Huntly. As you know, Monsieur, the Earl,
Like others 'mong these most contentious Lords
Of Scotland, wished to prove himself above
His Queen in power. So I, in turn, played soldier!
Tell that, as well, Monsieur, to my dear uncle.
'Twill entertain him, vastly, I am sure!
I passed whole days encased in mail and lived
In saddle, sleeping in my tent! 'Twas glorious!
A shield here, on my arm, a broadsword here,
I, Mary Stuart, put milord to flight,
And caught the Scottish fancy, for a time!
They called me their own Mary, seemed to love me!
And carried me in state to Edinburgh!
Then, knowing not what 'twas they asked of me,
They sent me long petitions, begging me
To wed again, at once.

[*She is pensive for a moment; then resumes
rather drolly*]

There was one Prince—
From Austria—but, poor Rizzio, here—

RIZZIO
MARY

Madame—

As blind as were my people—swore that should
I marry any foreign Prince, my claims
Upon the crown of England would be perilled.
That claim, as you all know, I'll never yield!
I was anointed to it in the Church.
And yet I mean not soon to press the matter,

For I love not so much to wear a crown.
 This one, of thistles, not yet come to down,
 Already presses far too sharply on
 My brow. But, as good Rizzio urged it—

RIZZIO

Madame, I

Am in despair, if you will pardon me
 For saying so before the gentlemen,
 For any part I may have had in bringing
 About a union that now promises—

MARY

Nay, Rizzio, I am in no blaming mood.
 Still, 'twas in deference to you, who are
 So skilled and practised in diplomacy—

[*He protests*]

Well, then, in music, and in poetry—
 I sent Sir Melvil, first, to England, to
 The Queen, who, as a learned virgin, might
 So well instruct me how to choose a Consort—
 Do you go on, now, Melvil, with the tale—

MELVIL

I fear, your Majesty, the story's long.
 However, to be brief as brief may be,
 The royal lady whom I visited,
 And whom our Queen outwitted in the voyage
 From France; whose earlier royal spite has been
 Allayed by Madame's gentle correspondence;
 The royal lady whom I visited,
 Was very gracious, if surprisingly
 Uncertain in her counsels. Er—for instance;
 At first she urged Lord Leicester as a party
 Upon whose union with our Majesty
 Of Scotland she would look approvingly—
 But here, 'twas first she would, and then she
 wouldn't—

I need not name the reason—you all know it!

Well, getting to the pleasant topic of
 Our Queen—"Now, tell me," said Elizabeth,
 "Is she as beautiful as people say?"
 I said: "She is considered beautiful!"
 But, as I lacked a standard by which I
 Could make comparison, the lady said:
 "Come, now! Be frank! I'll give you one: Is she
 As beautiful as I am?"

[*Prolonged laughter. Only RIZZIO does not
 join in it*]

Then, without

A smile I answered—as a wise man should:
 "Your Majesty's the loveliest woman in England!
 Our Queen is loveliest in Scotland."

MARY

Ah,

Melvil's not wanting in diplomacy!

MELVIL

"But which of us is taller?" asked the Queen,
 Less satisfied, my friends, than you, with my
 Reply: "My mistress, Madame!" "Then she is
 Too tall; for I am tall as any woman
 Should be!" "What are her recreations, Sir?"
 "She hunts, your Majesty, and rides, and plays
 The lute and harpsichord." "Does she play well?"
 "Why, yes, your Majesty; she plays quite well—
 Even very well, I may say, for a Queen!"

[*He ceases to imitate, and speaks, confidentially, as all at table move to take up the goblets which SÉBASTIEN has been filling.*

Enter, silently, through the curtained doorway, DARNLEY, who takes his place behind MARY'S chair. Only RIZZIO perceives him, and he sits, transfixed, staring

at DARNLEY, whose eyes are fixed upon him]

And, gentlemen, my word of honour on't—

[Catches RIZZIO's look of horror, turns, perceives DARNLEY, and stops short.]

MARY

What is it, Melvil?

[She follows his glance, looks at DARNLEY]

Sir, what do you here?

[Enter, in rough armour, and ghastly white, RUTHVEN. Behind him DOUGLAS, and, following him, CAREW. They remain in the background, but in the torchlight their armour gleams]

Why are you armed, my Lords, here, in the Palace?

RUTHVEN

Nay, Madame, 'tis his business. Ask the King!

MARY

My Lord, what is the meaning of your strange Forgetfulness of the proprieties?

DARNLEY

It means that man must leave this place, at once!

MARY

That gentleman, my Lord, is in my service!

Therefore, he takes no orders, but from me!

RIZZIO

[Edges toward her, his teeth chattering]

My Lord—Madame—

DARNLEY

Ho, Douglas! Ruthven! Carew!

[Enter, mercenaries, who, led by DOUGLAS and RUTHVEN, rush for RIZZIO, about whom the QUEEN'S party crowd to save him. Chairs, table are overturned in the fracas. RIZZIO, at last, falls to knees, clinging to MARY'S skirt and crying out.]

MELVIL

Good God!

MARY

How dare you, brutes?

RIZZIO

Giustizia!

SETON

[*Trying, with MARY, to protect him*]

God!

MARY

Away, I say! My Lords! Help! Help!

DARNLEY

Proceed!

MARY

Forbear, my Lords! How dare you?

DARNLEY

At him! At him!

RIZZIO

Giustizia!

MARY

Mercy! Help! Help!

SETON

Mercy! Mercy!

[*CAREW, suddenly, springs to MARY herself, and holds his knife to her breast, while the others fall like a pack of hounds upon RIZZIO, stabbing at him.*]

MELVIL

Good God! Her Majesty—

[*DARNLEY seizes MARY about waist, pulls her away.*]

MARY

Help! Help!

SETON

Help! Help!

DARNLEY

Come! Is he not dead yet?

RUTHVEN

[*Staggers to his feet, waving his knife*]

He's dead, your Grace!

DARNLEY

[*Releases MARY*]

Then pitch him in the courtyard!

[*The assassins seize RIZZIO's body, drag it towards curtained doors. RUTHVEN, to SÉBASTIEN, pale with terror.*]

RUTHVEN

Bring me wine!

MARY

[*To him*]

RUTHVEN

How dare you, in the presence of your Queen!

Nay, I have earned a drink! It is not insolence!

I'm tired! This exercise is most unusual;

Still, it was needful, for I serve the King!

[*Enter, GEORGE DOUGLAS, drawn sword in*]

hand. Behind him terrified nobles. They stop in the curtained doorway.

GEORGE

Your Majesty—your Grace—

[Catches sight of RIZZIO's body, at his feet]

Good God! What's here?

DARNLEY

Be good enough to leave us. Nothing has
Been done here but by Royal orders. Go!

*[The Lords, in trouble, sheathe their swords,
and exit.]*

MARY

[At door to her room; to DARNLEY]

My Lord, you have slain more than David Rizzio.
More than his death your bestial cruelty
Has slain my heart; set in its place
A thing of stone. But him I hold here, if
You have not killed him with the self-same stroke,
Shall take revenge for these unnatural insults!

[Enters her room, SETON following.]

CURTAIN

EPISODE THREE

SCENE:—*A prison room in Lochleven. A barred window overlooks the loch. L., a bedroom. Up R., a diagonal doorway that leads to anteroom. The huge doors are open. The furnishings of the room consist of two stools, one with a broken leg; one old armchair, a table and a cracked mirror on the wall.*

The time is late afternoon deepening into night.

DISCOVERED:—MARY, seated before the barred window. *The last rays of the declining sun light up her face. She holds a bit of embroidery, but stitches fitfully.*

AT RISE:—*She takes a stitch or two; drops work, leans forward, looking out of the window. Enter, from bedroom, MARY SETON.*

SETON
MARY

You called me, Madame? Is your thread run out?
No, Seton.—If I called, it was unwitting.

[Picks up work again, but does not stitch.

Looks out of window]

I'm thinking of the trivial circumstances
That may suffice to rouse a prisoner's
Attention.

SETON
MARY

What is new, Madame?

That light—

See how it twinkles 'mong those trees across
The loch!

SETON

But, Madame, we have seen that, oft,
Before.

MARY

True!—True! For many nights. Yet now
The flickering motion of it, 'gainst the still
Black leaves, has something in't that comforts. Seton,
How long have we been prisoned in Lochleven?
Some twenty months, Madame.

SETON

MARY

Some twenty months!
Was ever one short life so full of strange
Vicissitudes! Poor Rizzio!

SETON

God has punished
His murderer, Madame!

MARY

True, and punished me,
Who have, since Darnley's death, been tossed about
Like a frail ship without a rudder, on
The wild sea of my own tempestuous nature!
The Cardinal, my uncle, warned me 'gainst it.
'Twas doubly necessary, could he but
Have known the harsh, unruly contests here
For power; the animosities, the envies,
The plottings and contentions everywhere!
Oh, when I think of France and see about me
Stone walls—black waters—no news from without
Save what my gaoler, Douglas, is disposed
To impart to me—

SETON

Dear Madame, do not weep;
Come! dry your eyes. Someone is coming! There—
[Enter, a Steward, with a hamper, which he
sets down, up L. At a sign from DOUGLAS,
who follows him in, he exits.

MARY

[Without raising her eyes. To SETON]
Let him not spread the table. I want nothing.
I'll spare my Lord the performance of his duty
As Royal taster!

DOUGLAS

[*To SETON; then to MARY*]

'Tis not supper, Mistress.

This is your washing, Madame. As to tasting,
I have small relish for such service, which
I do but render as a courtesy

To give assurance to a doubting guest.

MARY

A guest? You guard your guests with iron bars
In Scotland? Keep them under lock and key?

DOUGLAS

'Tis useless to discuss those things, Madame.
Enough to say, I have a letter here
Addressed to you.

[*Hands letter to SETON, from whom MARY
takes it, eagerly.*]

MARY

A letter—here—to me?

From Murray. You are well informed, no doubt,
Concerning its purport?

DOUGLAS

I am.

MARY

I thought so;

For Murray, who's half-brother to us both—
Of different mothers,—mine, alas, is dead,—
But yours, and his— He would, of course, inform
His mother of the honours he has assumed.

DOUGLAS

He would, Madame; and he has written us.

MARY

And so my brother, Murray, upon whom
I've showered kindnesses, though well informed
Of his astute intriguing with the Court
Of England and with rebel lords of Scotland,
Requites me by assuming my own sceptre!

DOUGLAS

Our brother, Madame, is made Regent—yes!
He will repair the wrongs which favourites,
Both foreigners and Scottish, have inflicted
Upon the people.

MARY

Will he also right

The wrongs your people have done Mary Stuart?
 For some they have done—cruel, cruel wrongs.
 As for the favourites—are favourites
 Such novelties in Scotland? James, my father,
 Had favourites, men, and women, of which Murray,
 My brother Murray, and your brother, now the Re-
 gent,
 Is living testimony.

DOUGLAS

Madame—

MARY

Spare me!

'Tis useless to discuss these things, Lord Douglas.

*[Picks up embroidery. DOUGLAS stamps to-
 wards door, turns there to speak; thinks
 better of it, exits.]*

SETON

Dear Madame! Can it be Lord Murray is
 Made Regent?

MARY

It appears he has assumed

The office. 'Tis not legal till I say so!
 Ah, Seton, I remember when we sailed
 From Calais, how I wept at sight of those
 Poor wretches who were tossed upon the waves.
 Say—who was right, then, you or I, who saw
 In it an evil sign? 'Twas prophecy!

SETON

Dear Madame, try to think of other things!

This melancholy is increasing! Courage!

MARY

Ah, courage is no easy thing, my dear,

For one struck right and left by such misfortunes!

SETON

Dear Madame—

MARY

Listen, Seton—what is that?

SETON

*[Rises, looks out of window, pressing her face
 against the bars]*

Some entertainment is on hand. The Court

And landings are quite crowded. Some are armed!
 MARY Armed men come not to festivals! Good God!
 My enemies! Lord Lindsay's there, who brought
 Us here! But there is Melvil, too.

SETON Well, then,
 Take courage, Madame. If Sir Melvil's with
 them—

MARY He is a man of peace, but Ruthven, Lindsay—
 [*A muffled knocking is heard on outer door*]

What violent knocking! See who 'tis!

SETON [*Hurries into anteroom. Seen in depths,
 against door, listening; then she hurriedly
 returns.*]

Your Majesty!

Oh, summon all your fortitude.

MARY Who is it?

SETON Lords Lindsay, Ruthven, Melvil. They are come
 In Murray's name. Oh God, my Lady! I
 Am sure some other mischief's brewing! I'll
 Not open to them. Oh, my Lady—

[*Knocking becomes louder. SETON would sup-
 port MARY.*]

MARY No,

It is nothing; I shall be myself again.
 That fatal name of Ruthven! Oh, the butcher!
 Yes! Something dreadful brings them, surely. Still,
 As they are come from Murray, my half-brother,
 Engage to stop them for a moment, that
 I may appear to have my wits about me.

[*Almost totters into bedroom. LINDSAY'S voice
 is heard from behind outer door.*]

LINDSAY Come, open! We're ambassadors!

SETON

Well, Sirs,

And are ambassadors exempt from manners?
 Wait, Sirs, upon your Sovereign's pleasure, as
 Good honest Scotsmen should do!

[*The outer door is shaken violently. SETON hurriedly closes the big door, and looks about distractedly for the bar for it, listening, the while, to the voices on the other side of the door, now clearer and louder.*

LINDSAY'S VOICE

By St. Andrew!

I'll smash it open if you force me to it!

MELVIL

[*In anteroom. As she cannot find bar for it, SETON thrusts her arm through the staples of big door*]

My Lord, let's wait a moment for Lord Ruthven!

LINDSAY

[*Pounding on big doors*]

I will not wait a second. Villain! Did
 You not declare the bar had been removed?

SETON

It has been so, my Lord; but with my arm
 Thrust through the staples I will hold it!

LINDSAY

I'll break it, Mistress, as I would a willow!

SETON

[*MARY enters, stops, in opening of bedroom*]

Yet, till you do, my Lord, I stand—

MARY

Come, Mary—

Obey me. Open!

[*SETON withdraws her arm. The doors burst open. Enter LINDSAY, in a rusty suit of armour. He has a huge sword strapped across his back, the hilt at left shoulder, the point clanking on floor. He is gauntleted, mailed; brutal in every respect. Behind him, MELVIL, in black velvet doublet and cap, small sword, as indication of rank, only.*

LINDSAY

[*Stamping in; to SETON*]

Well! Where is she, eh?
Has she not kept us long enough without
That we must wait within? Or, does she think
She still holds Court here?

MELVIL

Good, my Lord, let's wait
For Ruthven, since there's nothing can be done
Without him.

LINDSAY

He may wait who chooses. I
Will not bide on her pleasure. I will find her,
Wherever she is hiding.

MARY

Good my Lord

Of Lindsay—

[*LINDSAY involuntarily inclines; but at once
straightens up*]

We've detained you; but a woman
Does not, right willingly, receive even enemies,
Without a thought given to her toilette. It
Is true men are less giv'n to ceremony—
Good morrow, Melvil. Welcome to our prison,
E'en as we ever welcomed you and yours
To palaces.

[*To LINDSAY*]

Your weapon's weighty. You,
Mayhap, are on your guard against some enemy?
If not, 'tis strange adornment to put on
In visiting a woman. But, no matter;
I am a Stuart; too much of a Stuart
To fear a sword, though it be naked.

[*LINDSAY swirls his weapon round, tries its
point on ground as he speaks.*]

LINDSAY

This one
Is in its place, here, Madame. 'Tis an old

Acquaintance of your family. Your father,
 King James, the fifth, was threatened with it, once,
 At Buccleugh! What is more, some time ago,
 At Carberry Hill, the infamous traitor, Bothwell,
 Who dared an honest man to hold him guilty
 Of Darnley's murder, had a glimpse of it.
 And had his cowardice been one whit less
 I would have done such work with this good steel,
 That hounds and carrion crows should have found
 morsels

Along the road, already cut for them!

[MELVIL and SETON eye each other, horrified.]

MARY

My Lord, it is not hard to strike an enemy
 Who is unarmed, who stands quite at your mercy.
 Were Mary Stuart heir to James's sword,
 As she is to his sceptre, your blade, Lindsay,
 Long as it is, might still prove far too short.
 But you have not come here for idle boasting.
 We pray your pardon if we bring you back
 To something of more int'rest.

[Enter LORD RUTHVEN, behind him a Steward
 with parchments.]

LINDSAY

Since my Lord
 Of Ruthven favours us, we can proceed
 Upon our mission.

[RUTHVEN is in buff coat; undress Court dress.
 The Steward places papers on table, spreads
 them out, moves the one chair into position
 for RUTHVEN, and turns to adjust the
 torches in wall sockets. As he turns, MARY
 sweeps royally to the chair and sits.]

MARY

Pray proceed, my Lords.
 I wait the purpose of your mission. Is't

Of such a nature that two warriors, so
Renowned as you, Lord Lindsay, you, Lord Ruthven,
Still hesitate to pass it on to me?

[*Steward exits.*]

RUTHVEN

However painful it may be, Madame,
A Ruthven never hesitates before
His duty. You, no doubt, by your duress,
Are now prepared to hear what we have come
To say, as spokesmen for the Secret Council.

MARY

A body I established? By what right,
Sirs, does the Secret Council dare to act
Without me? But, no matter. I presume
'Tis some petition which implores my mercy
For those who've dared usurp the power which I
Hold, God-appointed?

RUTHVEN

Quite the opposite.

To offer you a pardon from the Council.

MARY

Nay, really! That's so novel an idea
It downs my anger!—But, my Lord, go on!

RUTHVEN

The pardon's offered on conditions which
Are set forth in these deeds.

MARY

Am I to read them?

Or is it I'm to sign them with closed eyes,
Confiding in the motives of my Lords?

RUTHVEN

The Secret Council wishes you to have
Full cognizance of their contents; and that
You sign them of your own free will, Madame.

MARY

Pray read them, then—I think it is your duty;
Not all this pother of "the early age"
At which began my reign in Scotland—nor
These paragraphs that talk of my fatigue
Arising from the task of governing—
But here; begin, my Lord.

RUTHVEN

[*Reading*]

“ By these, our letters, made in free good will,
 I here renounce, demit the Crown of Scotland,
 In favour of my infant son; entrusting
 Lord Lindsay and Lord Ruthven, in my name,
 To represent me; to renounce for me,
 Before the clergy, burgesses, and people,
 Assembled, all, at Stirling, guidance, crown,
 And government of Scotland,” dated, signed,
 Et cetera. Well, Madame, you have heard it!
 I heard, yet to my ears, which for some time
 Have been obliged to listen to strange things,
 It seemed as 'twere some rebels falsifying
 The honour of Lord Lindsay, and Lord Ruthven.
 Our “ honour ”! from a woman who has been
 So careless in the guarding of her own?
 My Lord—

MARY

LINDSAY

MELVIL

MARY

Be silent, Melvil. Though I have
 No sword, I have a buckler in my conscience,
 Strong as the coat-of-mail which so discreetly
 Protects my Lord of Lindsay.

[*To RUTHVEN*]

So, my Lord,
 All that my loving subjects want of me
 Is date, and signature, by which
 I fling my sceptre down and take to turning
 A distaff? 'Tis a gen'rous offer, truly.
 But you've another paper. Something more
 You'd have me sign?

RUTHVEN

A deed, whereby your Grace
 Confirms the action of the Secret Council,
 Who have appointed your beloved brother,
 The Earl of Murray, Regent of the Kingdom

MARY

Oh! This is touching! Really touching, Sirs!
 My brother, upon whom I have conferred
 His every title, raising him from Prior
 To be a man of power in Scotland, now
 Would have me add another title to
 Those I've already given him!—My Lords,
 Go back to those who sent you. Say that to
 Demands of this sort Mary Stuart makes
 No answer. She has none to make!

RUTHVEN

Beware!

Your pardon will be granted solely on
 Condition that you sign.

MARY

If I refuse?

RUTHVEN

Your Grace knows well the laws. Adultery
 And murder are high crimes, for which, already,
 Here, and in England, more than one Queen has
 Paid penalty, by death.

MARY

Upon what proof

Am I accused of crimes like these? I, who
 Have all at stake, may surely know?

RUTHVEN

The proof

Cannot be questioned. It lies in the marriage
 Between Lord Darnley's widow and his murd'rer.

MARY

[*With emotion*]

If he was murdered—I know nothing; save
 That God himself avenged the brutal crime
 Which Darnley instigated, watching while
 'Twas done! I did, indeed, rejoice, when venge-
 ance

O'ertook him; as did many here in Scotland,
 Resentful that an English Lord should share
 My throne, which they themselves so longed to do.
 They clamored, all, to have a Scottish King!

Well, Sirs, who was it hurried me to put
 Aside my mourning, and to marry Bothwell?
 I hold the papers which you signed, my Lord
 Of Ruthven, you, too, Lindsay; only Melvil
 Entreated me against it. All the rest,
 For your own reasons, said to be of State,
 Devised that marriage as a trap for me,
 A young and ignorant woman, hedged about by false,
 Perfidious advisers.

RUTHVEN

Madame, this
 But begs the present question, which is, whether
 Your life and honour being conceded you,
 You will consent to abdicate the throne
 Of Scotland?

MARY

Were I willing, where's the pledge
 The promise you make in these papers would
 Be kept?

RUTHVEN

Our word of honour, Madame.

MARY

Ah,

A feeble guaranty from Lords, who can
 So soon forget the deeds you signed so short
 A time ago. I'd need a trifle more
 To assure me.

LINDSAY

Ruthven, for an hour this woman
 Has answered to our propositions with
 Bold insults!

MELVIL

Wait, my Lords, in Heaven's name!
 Make some allowance for one who is accustomed
 These years to give command; yet who, today,
 Has no choice left but to obey us.

LINDSAY

Then,
 In God's name, Melvil, use your honied words
 And get the answer which our plain demand.

Fails to draw from her. Ruthven, come! We'll give
You fifteen minutes, Melvil.

[He goes out, sword clanking behind him.]

RUTHVEN follows.

[Dropping on one knee]

MELVIL

Madame, you

Awhile ago deplored you had not followed
My earlier advice. That which I now
Would offer is of greater import, far,
Than that was. Madame, your regret will be
Still bitterer, if now you fail to heed me.
You know not what may happen, cannot dream
Of what Lord Murray may be capable.

MARY

This night has given me proof, sufficient strong,
Of his great powers. What more, now, can he do
Than he has done? Bring me to public trial?
I'll ask for nothing better. Let me free
To plead my cause, and you will see if Judges
Will dare condemn me!

MELVIL

'Tis for that good reason

They'll carefully avoid a trial, Madame.
Here, you are safer for them, guarded by
Sworn enemies; no witness here, but God,
Who, though He avenges crime, alas, does not
Forewarn the victim, be his fate the sword,
Or—poison!

MARY

Melvil, I would welcome death

As expiation for my many faults.
I'm proud, at times, I know; yet humble, when
I search my conscience. I am most unjustly
Accused of that which has to do with Darnley,
Yet justly censured for my act with Bothwell.

MELVIL

Madame, a moment only's left to us!

Come! Make the best that may be, in your plight.
 You are alone, immured in enemy castle,
 With but one woman, Mistress Seton, by you.
 My Liege, an abdication that's compelled
 In circumstances like to these about you,
 Your subjects will refuse to credit.
 They will be sure it was extorted from you;
 And, Madame, when the time's propitious to
 Enforce your protest, you will have at least
 Two witnesses on whom you may rely—
 You, Mistress Mary Seton, will be one—
 The other—here—your Melvil—

SETON

Oh, Sir Melvil—

LINDSAY

[*Clanks in, with RUTHVEN following*]

Well, Madame, are you ready?

RUTHVEN

Pray, remember,

Your answer must be plain, and definite.
 No mental reservations, Madame!

MARY

Nay,

You are exacting. You'd not ask such right
 Were I at liberty, surrounded by
 A trusty escort. Being behind these bars—
 But you would have my signature. Sir Melvil,
 Please pass the pen to me.

RUTHVEN

I hope, however,

You've not in mind a later protest, based
 Upon the bars to which you now allude?

MARY

[*Rising indignantly*]

My Lords, you asked me for an abdication.
 I was about to sign it; but, if you
 Add to the first demand, that written here—
 That I renounce my rights of my own motion,

As if I deemed myself unfit to reign,
I will not sign! No! never!

LINDSAY

[With his gauntleted hand, seizes her by the wrist]

Now, I warn you,

Our patience is exhausted. Madame, sign!
Else we may end in breaking that which will
Not bend!

[MARY looks at him steadily, the others recoiling. Under her gaze LINDSAY drops her hand. She turns back her sleeve; shows a deep purple mark, of fingers.]

MARY

There is no further obstacle,
My Lords Ambassadors. Here is the proof
My will has not been forced. I freely sign.

[Writes]

"I hereby abdicate the throne of Scotland!"—

[Lays pen down; passes, with royal sweep, into bedroom. SETON following, in silence.]

RUTHVEN

[Gathers up his papers]

Your method, Lindsay, is not usual
In matters diplomatic, yet I own
It's most effective.

LINDSAY

Nay, were I convinced
That she is innocent of all she's charged with,
I promise you no man should harm a hair
That's growing on her head.

RUTHVEN

So? Blows the wind

That way? I have heard said no man may look
Upon her, and not love her; yet, who'd think
Lord Lindsay so susceptible to tears
And melting voice!

LINDSAY

Enough, my Lord of Ruthven!
We understand each other, do we not?

[Enter DOUGLAS, followed by GEORGE DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS

Till the Commissioners have supped, do you
Keep guard here, George.

[To LORDS]

My Lords, the supper is
Set on the table.

RUTHVEN

I'll do justice to it.

LINDSAY

[Follows DOUGLAS and RUTHVEN out]

And I will, Douglas, that I promise you!

[The door is heard to close on their exit.

GEORGE DOUGLAS, alone, stands motionless for a moment; then crosses, seizes a torch from the wall, and waves it before window; replaces it in wall socket. Then, crosses again and knocks on bedroom door. SETON looks out, startled.

GEORGE

No outcry, Mistress. I would see her Majesty
Alone.

MARY

[Emerges from room, her arm about SETON]

I am alone with Mistress Seton.

She is my other self, my sister. You?

GEORGE

I, Madame, am George Douglas—

MARY

You, a Douglas?

And you, a Douglas, kneel to me?

GEORGE

Two Douglases—

[Goes to anteroom, beckons. Enter LITTLE DOUGLAS, a slender lad of twelve, in page's dress]

Who come to serve you. Little Douglas, here,
Is orphaned; he has heart of gold, and head
Of steel.

LITTLE DOUGLAS

And lays them both before you, Madame.

MARY I do not understand.

GEORGE

Our time is short;
I must speak rapidly. My Liege, I saw
You, years ago, in France—

MARY

In France?

GEORGE

Since when my heart has held no other image—
Nay, Madame, do not turn away. I crossed
The Channel in the galley which brought you
To Scotland; served among the Royal Guards
In your campaign 'gainst Huntly;—later, too,
As guard, at Holyrood—

MARY

Can this be true?

I saw you not—at any time.

GEORGE

I'm used

To pass through life unnoticed, Madame; but,
I come to lay my love, my life, my all
Here, at your feet—

MARY

[*Raises him*]

Unhappy man! And yet
How sweet to hear there still remains one heart
That loves me! Bless you, Douglas!

[*Wipes eyes, looks up*]

Lord, to Thee

I render thanks—

GEORGE

Your Majesty can see
That light across the loch? It is a signal
Made by a waiting army. Read! Read this—

[*Gives her a paper. She scans it, amazed.*]

MARY

“Thus we, the undersigned Lords, Barons, Earls—”
What purports this? These pledge themselves to lead
Me from Lochleven? But the means to leave it?

[*DOUGLAS signs to LITTLE DOUGLAS, who
tosses white linen articles from the hamper,*

up Scene and brings to light two suits of livery, like his own.

GEORGE

They're here, if you will don this livery,
And follow Little Douglas through the throng
Of servants who have crossed the loch this even
To aid in 'tending the ambassadors.

MARY

Oh God, Sir, is this true? You come not here
To mock? A way has opened, then, to freedom?

GEORGE

If you, by sheer audacity, will take it.
Three thousand Scotsmen wait upon yon hill
Who'll gladly die for you—

MARY

No, no! Not die!

Behind me lies, already, a trail of blood;
I would not add to it, even for a kingdom.
Three thousand men are but a handful, 'gainst
My enemies. To combat were mere slaughter!
But, could they guard me to the seacoast, or,
Safe to the English border—

GEORGE

Madame—

MARY

Well

I know it is impossible for me,
For Mary Stuart, to remain in Scotland;
But, might I reach, get aid from France, or Spain,
Or England, which lies nearest, and on which
I hold some claims for hospitality—

GEORGE

On England? Madame, 'tis extraordinary—

MARY

So are my sorrows, Douglas. England's Queen
It may be is misled by envious Murray.
She is reputed hard; she may be so;
But, then, she is a Queen. She will not fail—
For we have had a friendly correspondence—
When I, her sister sovereign, ask her help!
Besides, I have her promise that she will

Receive me; give me sanctuary. Thence,
I can communicate with France, return
Within the year with reinforcements; bring
An army to support these loyal Scotsmen!

*[Sounds of revelry, and piping from Court
below.]*

GEORGE

God grant your Majesty's confiding heart
Be not mistaken thus to trust yourself
To England. I entreat you, Madame, hasten!
I, to avert suspicion, must go now.
You may confide yourself to Little Douglas,
Who'll guide you safely to the landing
Where you will find a boat, full manned, in waiting.
This livery will fit your Majesty;

MARY

'Twas measured by good Mistress Mary Fleming!
One of my own four Marys! Bless you, Sir.
That word's a passport to completest trust!

*[Exits into bedroom, with SETON carrying
liveries.]*

DOUGLAS

Now, Laddie, 'tis your turn to show yourself
A loyal servant to the loveliest Queen
And most unfortunate lady in the world!
Here are the keys. Give me your counterfeits;
Lock all the doors behind you as you pass;
'Twill hinder them if there should be alarm.
You know the signal? First, the waving torch
To tell the army that the Queen is coming—

LITTLE DOUGLAS

An owl's hoot at the window, and away!

GEORGE

Ah, Cousin, what you do tonight would make
More than one older Scotsman envious!

[Sudden shaking of outer door]

God!

[Hurriedly drops LITTLE DOUGLAS into the

*hamper, piles the linen on him, closes it.
Exits into anteroom, returns, preceded by
DOUGLAS]*

My Lord—

DOUGLAS
GEORGE

You've been on guard here, constantly?
Continually. The pris'ners have retired,
As it would seem, taking some umbrage at
My presence.

DOUGLAS

They are insolent, as usual.
Well, I'll relieve you, in an hour.

[Accompanying him]

Meanwhile,

I'll interview the outer guards.

[The closing of door upon them is heard.]

*LITTLE DOUGLAS gets out of hamper, goes
centre, seizes a torch from wall and waves
it three times before the window. Hur-
riedly replaces it, and knocks on the bed-
room door.*

*Re-enter, MARY, and MARY SETON, in
page's dress.*

LITTLE DOUGLAS

My Lady

If you are ready—

SETON

Little Douglas, I
Shall ne'er be ready if it comes to courage.
My knees are giving way, I do believe!

MARY

And mine! But with my petticoats I've shed
My natural alarms. I' faith, I feel
Already free—

LITTLE DOUGLAS

Nay, Madame, feel it not
Too openly; that might betray us. Set
This jug upon your shoulder; it will shade

Your features! Mistress, this on yours— So, now—
[*Runs to window, hoots there*]

Come, come . . .

[*Exits.*]

MARY

Remember, Seton, what was said
By our deliverer! If it's done, 'twill be
By sheer audacity—

[*Starts after SETON; stops in terror, straightens up. Exits.*]

CURTAIN

SECOND PERIOD



EPISODE FOUR

TIME:—*Eighteen years later.*

PLACE:—*Fotheringay.*

SCENE:—*A great bare chamber, black walls. These show dampness. Wide, massive doors up C. Up R., a cabinet. A chair, up L., on slightly raised dais. Sparse furnishings, otherwise, and gloomy air throughout.*

AT RISE:—SIR AMYAS PAWLET, followed by SIR DRURY, enter. DRURY carries a leathern sack. Behind them, SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, PAWLET, and DRURY cross to cabinet, before which PAWLET sits; MORTIMER feigns a careless air, but sharply examines the room.

MORTIMER

So, Uncle, this is where the Queen is kept?

PAWLET

Nay, Sir, there is but one Queen here in England.

The woman in my charge is Lady Stuart.

MORTIMER

True, Uncle. Tell me, what she's pris'ner for?

For I admit that in my years abroad

I have forgot, if ever I have known it.

PAWLET

[*Trying to open cabinet drawers*]

The charge is complicated. In beginning,

It had to do with my Lord Darnley's death.

He was a cousin to our own good Queen,

Whose duty 'twas to punish his foul murder;

So when, on invitation of Queen Bess,

My Lady Stuart rode into the kingdom,

Elizabeth refused to see her, till

She cleared herself of murder, which was charged
 Against her by her own half-brother, then
 The Regent. So, the Lady Stuart was
 Detained, and brought to trial. But, so artful
 Was she, no jot was found against her. Still,
 It was thought best, until proof could be found
 That she was innocent, to keep her in
 Confinement. From which time she has done naught—
 She, and misguided sympathizers—
 But plot escape; sow discord; plan the vilest
 Conspiracies! With Norfolk, who died for it,
 Westmoreland and Northumberland—and dozens
 You'll not remember, cozened by this papist.
 Though prisoner, she sets the land on fire!
 In Rheims, I met with Mistress Mary Seton,
 Who served for many years your prisoner
 And seldom spoke of her except with tears;
 Especially, when talking of the escape
 Of Lady Stuart from Lochleven, and
 Young Douglas, and the Little Douglas, too,
 Both slaughtered by Lord Murray's forces, following.
 I've seen the Lady's portrait, oft, in France.
 I would that you had seen the Lady there!
 It is a pity, Sir, for one of your
 Ripe years to serve as goaler!

MORTIMER

PAWLET
MORTIMER

PAWLET

'Tis because
 I am ripe, I am here! I'm past the season
 When practised wiles can tempt a man to treason.

[*Finds papers, scoops them into sack. DRURY
 holding it*]

But here, I warrant you, there's plenty of it!
 Go, Drury, take away this sack, and bring
 Another.

[*DRURY exits with sack.*]

MORTIMER
PAWLET

What a gruesome place it is here!
Nay, Nephew, save your pity for a cause
That's worthy.

MORTIMER

Pardon, Uncle. I am come
But lately from the Continent, and there
They speak of Lady Stuart as Queen, and
Martyr!

PAWLET

'Tis what they call her there, and threat to do
In England, spreads alarm throughout the land.
If Lady Stuart is to be made martyr,
She'll owe it to the intrigues of the Guises.
Now, Nephew—let me counsel you—'twere better
You keep your pity for your rightful Queen.
I will! When may I see her?

MORTIMER
PAWLET

When I next
Report to Westminster, you shall with me.
[DRURY re-enters, with empty sack. Behind
him, JANE KENNEDY, with cloth in hand.
[Eyes PAWLET, ransacking the cabinet]

KENNEDY

Oh, Sir—must you intrude so soon again?
That cabinet holds all my lady's secrets!
It is your Lady's secrets we are after!
The Secretary, Master Curle, on oath,
Has sworn your Lady Stuart is in league,
Despite our watchfulness, with vile assassins,
Who undertake to slay the Queen of England!
He would not dare accuse my Lady, were
He here, confronting her!

PAWLET

KENNEDY

PAWLET

No! he would turn
And flatter her; as all men do, who face her.

KENNEDY

[MORTIMER, with pretended disdain, exits.
Alas, Sir Amyas, though you are her gaoler,
I know you for an honest gentleman.

Now, tell me—on your conscience—if there be
Not in the laws of England one that holds
That every plaintiff must confront the person
Whom he accuses, in the open Court?

PAWLET
KENNEDY

Yes, Mistress, there is such a law!

Then why

Has it been voided with my Lady Stuart?
'Tis said one, Babington, involved her in
A plot to kill the Queen; but where's the proof?
It was not verified. Now he is dead,
And gone, while she is still suspected. Sir,
I'd swear, as she has sworn, my Lady never
Saw hair or hide of Babington. If she
Is in the plot at all, it is as victim!

[PAWLET gives directions to DRURY, who exits
with second sack. KENNEDY passes cloth
over walls]

Sir Pawlet, there is damp upon these walls.
My Lady's suffering from it, painfully.
The more so, as it's got, now, to her bed.
Could you not add a cover to it?

PAWLET
KENNEDY

Her bed is her own making, Mistress.

Still,

It irks my heart to see a Lady born
To silks and velvets brought to this dire want —
Deprived of every comfort—airings—

PAWLET

What

She brewed, she drinks. But I will make report
Of it at Westminster. What's there commanded,
I'll carry out, and nothing more.

KENNEDY
PAWLET

Well, sir.

Ha, Mistress, look at these! She's still conniving
With foreign priests and plotters!

KENNEDY

Oh, Sir Amyas,

These Cardinals are kinsmen to my Lady.
Whom might she look to, tell her sorrow to
If not to them? 'Tis human nature, surely!

PAWLET

What, Mistress! Are you fallen victim to
Her wiles? Will you be turning papist, next?

KENNEDY

Sir Pawlet, I am of the Established Church,
And none can question me. But I have feelings.

PAWLET

Then keep them for the service of your Queen.
'Twere better for you, Mistress. Ha! addressed—
Sealed—to the Queen, and this one to the Earl
Of Leicester.

KENNEDY

Is it so? But, good Sir Pawlet,
Where is the crime to write to him who serves
The Queen of England as Lord Leicester does?

PAWLET

My Lord was once a suitor to the Stuart.

KENNEDY

'Tis that, belike, which makes her turn to him
As friend in her adversity.

PAWLET

Perhaps;

My Lord can steer a middle course when need
be!

[*Tosses letter aside*]

Nor has he ceased to dream of winning crowns
Through one Queen, or the other.—Ah, a spring!
What's this? Her jewelry, with precious stones—
The fleur-de-lis of France?

KENNEDY

Oh, do not take
Those, Sir! The scribbled verses, if you must;
My Lady has no entertainment here
Save writing out her heart, or 'broidering;
These are her resource; but the jewels—they
Are from her infant's christening, kept all

These years—her rings, once worn in France—I beg
you

To leave them where you found them, Sir!

PAWLET

Oh, no—

Such costly things as these may easily
Be made to purchase men—and weapons— Ha!
The Lady's coming, crucifix in hand,
But in her heart, I'll warrant, pride, and lust!

[MARY enters, carrying her Book of Hours,
and crucifix.

MARY

Sir Pawlet—here?

KENNEDY

Alas, my Lady, all

Is taken this time—letters—jewelry—

MARY

Well, Jane, I can support this, too. I'm used
To changes since I came to England. But,
Sir Amyas, you have ta'en by force what I
Designed to have delivered to you. 'Mongst
The papers is a letter to the Queen,
Your Royal Mistress. Pledge me, Sir, that you
Will place it in her Majesty's own hand.

I would not have it trusted to Lord Burleigh.

PAWLET

I'll think about it. I will do what's best.

MARY

Sir, you may know its import. I am seeking
An audience with the Queen; for, though I came
To England on her promise to receive me—

Now, eighteen years ago, today sees us

Still unacquainted with each other. But

Being sore beset—for, as you know, I have

Been called before a court of gentlemen—

I never can acknowledge them my peers—

PAWLET

No? You have often trusted fate and honour
To men less worthy of esteem.

MARY

Perhaps—

But still, her Majesty is of my kindred.
 Wait, Sir. It is a month of dread suspense
 Since the Commissioners surprised me here
 And with unseemly haste forced me, though stunned
 And unprepared, with none to counsel me,
 To answer, from my memory, their charges.
 Sir, I am anxious! Let me know the worst!
 What have I still to hope, or fear?

PAWLET

[*After a moment*]

’Twere best

To close your accounts with Heaven.

MARY

Nay—from Heav’n

I’m sure of mercy—but from earthly judges?

PAWLET

Depend upon it, justice will be done you.

MARY

My trial, then, is over?

PAWLET

I am not

At liberty to say.

MARY

Am I condemned?

PAWLET

I cannot tell you.

MARY

Is the murd’rer, then,

To come upon me suddenly, as did

My Judges?

PAWLET

Hold to that thought, Madame; so
 He’ll find you more prepared than they found you!

[*Enter, MORTIMER. He pushes rudely past*

MARY.

MORTIMER

My Lord is asking for you, Uncle.

[*Exits as he entered.*

MARY

[*To PAWLET*]

Sir

I venerate your years; but young men’s impudence—

I beg of you to spare me in the future,
Your nephew's presence.

PAWLET

'Tis his impudence
Commends him, Madame. He'll not melt before
A treacherous woman's wiles. I'll answer for him!
You'll only waste your subtlety on him.

[Exits.

KENNEDY

Dear Lady! It is hard to listen to
Such language!

[MORTIMER re-enters hurriedly.

MORTIMER

[To KENNEDY]

Mistress, guard the door. I have
Important matters with the Queen.

[KENNEDY, loth to go, exits.

MARY, *astonished, gazes, half fearfully,*
at MORTIMER. He hurries to her, places a
letter in her hand]

My Liege—

Fear nothing; only read this letter.

MARY

From
The Cardinal! "Confide in him who brings
This to you, Edward Mortimer. You have
No truer, better friend in England." You,
Sir? Can I really trust you whom I took
For a harsh enemy? You, who are nephew
To a hard gaoler—

MORTIMER

Madame, any moment
Lord Burleigh may be here. He's with my uncle.
I must content myself with saying now,
That I have spent some years in study, with
The Cardinal, at Rheims. I have been chosen,
And friends concur with me, to rescue you.

MARY

Ah, God!

MORTIMER

Have courage, Madame, and my Liege—
 ah, if the Britons might now but behold
 Their captive Queen, how England's youth would rise
 In general mutiny, and not a sword
 In all the Island sleep within its sheath
 Until your Majesty were free again!
 'Twere well with Mary Stuart, if every Briton
 Looked on her with your eyes.

MARY

MORTIMER

I have been schooled,
 And thoroughly, to know the fearful wrongs
 That have been done you; ay, and this last one,
 Of which the dreadful news is just made known.

MARY

Is it my sentence? Has it been pronounced?
 The verdict?

MORTIMER

Two-and-forty Judges have
 Declared you guilty of attempt upon
 The Tudor's life.

MARY

[*After a moment*]

Sir, I am not surprised.
 It is a subterfuge. I know their aim.
 They seek some ground on which to hold me, yes,
 As helpless prisoner, forever, here!

MORTIMER

Alas, your Majesty, they do not stop there!
 You are entangled in a terrible web;
 Only your death can make the crown sit steady
 Upon Elizabeth's head. That upstart Queen
 Means you shall perish on the scaffold!

MARY

Sir,

It is the honest care of a true heart
 Which conjures up such empty apprehensions.
 I do not fear the scaffold. What I fear,
 Is that the Queen would set my claims at rest
 By other means, less open. I confess

I never raise a goblet to my lips
Without the inward fear the draught that's in it
Is mingled by my Royal Sister's love.

MORTIMER

Dear Lady, fear no more. All is prepared.
I have twelve English noblemen, all pledged
To free you from captivity—

MARY

Too few!

All England guards the gates of Fotheringay.
Only the Queen may open them.

MORTIMER

She will not!

MARY

Or—there's one other.

MORTIMER

Who? Who is it? Tell me!

MARY

Lord Leicester—

MORTIMER

Leicester, Madame? He's your foe?
The fav'rite of Elizabeth!

MARY

[Smiles, ever so faintly]

He plays so.

Ah, Sir, if I am saved at all, 'twill be
Through him. Go, find him. Give him this—

[Takes a letter, and miniature from her bosom,
wraps them; gives them to MORTIMER]

Confide

Your plans to him. He'll aid you. This contains
My likeness, and a letter!

MORTIMER

Oh, my Liege,

Explain this mystery!

MARY

Confide in Leicester;

He will confide in you—

[KENNEDY enters, hurrying.

KENNEDY

Be on your guard!

Lord Burleigh's coming, Madame!

MARY

[To MORTIMER]

Go, Sir, go!

[MORTIMER *exits, barely escaping before BURLEIGH and PAWLET enter.*

BURLEIGH I come deputed from the Court of Justice.
 MARY Lord Burleigh lends that Court a willing tongue
 Which was already guided by his spirit.
 BURLEIGH You speak as if you knew the verdict, Madame!
 MARY Lord Burleigh brings it; hence I know it. But,
 Let's to the matter, Sir.

BURLEIGH You have acknowledged
 The jurisdiction of the two-and-forty—
 MARY My Lord, excuse me, if at the beginning
 I am obliged to interrupt you. No!
 I never have acknowledged it, my Lord!
 How could I do so? Give away my own
 Prerogatives? the entrusted rights of my
 Own people? the inheritance, as well,
 Of my own son, and every monarch's honour?
 It is enacted in the English laws
 That everyone who stands accused of crime
 Shall plead before a jury of his equals.
 Who, in this High Commission, is my equal?
 Kings are my only peers, my Lord of Burleigh!

BURLEIGH That is a point of mere formality.
 It cannot change the course of justice.
 You breathe the air of England; you enjoy
 The law's protection, and its benefits;
 Thus, you become its subject.

MARY No, I breathe
 The air of prison walls. Is that to live
 In England? For your laws, have I giv'n pledge
 To keep them? I'm no member of your realm!
 I am an independent, foreign Queen,
 And owe no prince more than he owes to me!

BURLEIGH

Well, Madame, do you think the name of Queen
 Can serve as charter to foment discord?
 Where would the State's security be found
 If Justice could not smite the guilty brow
 Of stranger King as freely as a beggar's?

MARY

I do not claim to be exempt from judgment;
 I only take exception to my Judges.

BURLEIGH

But are they not the foremost of the kingdom?
 Too independent to be else than honest?
 Is not the Reverend Primate at their head?
 The learned Talbot, keeper of the Seals?
 And Howard, Lord High Admiral of our Fleets?
 How could our matchless Sovereign do more
 Than out of all the monarchy select
 The noblest and appoint them Judges in
 Your suit? Why, Madame, were it probable
 That party hatred might corrupt one heart,
 Would forty chosen men unite in passing
 A sentence uttered like a word of passion?

MARY

Yes, truly, were these lords as you describe them,
 I must be silent; but these names, which you
 Are pleased to praise, I see performing, in
 The history of England, different parts.
 I see your noble, reverend House of Lords,
 Venal alike with the corrupted Commons,
 Make statutes, and annul them; ratify
 A marriage; then dissolve it, in obedience
 To Power's voice. Today it brands the King's
 Own daughters "Bastards"; yet, tomorrow, turns,
 Crowns them as Queens, and sets them on the throne.
 I see them, in four reigns, with pliant conscience
 Four times abjure their faith; renounce the Pope
 With Henry, yet retain the old belief;
 Reform again, with Edward; hear the Mass

Once more with Mary; with Elizabeth,
 Who governs now, turn from the Mass again.
 BURLEIGH You've said you are not versed in England's laws;
 You are, at least, well read in her misfortunes.
 MARY My Lord, I do not doubt that you are honest,
 And have the good of England much at heart;
 Nor that, besides yourself, there are among
 My Judges many upright men. But they
 Are of another country, different faith;
 Besides, they're eager to take judgment on
 The Queen of Scotland. Sir, 'tis an old saying
 That Scots and English ever are unjust
 Towards one another; but this living hatred
 Will never be extinguished till at last
 One Parliament, in concord, shall unite them,
 One common sceptre rule throughout the Island!
 BURLEIGH Could England hope for that good fortune from
 A Stuart?

Why not?

MARY I've not come to argue;
 BURLEIGH Rather, to read the Law.

[*Reads, from a document*]

"Thus, if a plot
 Shall rise henceforth in England, in the name,
 Or for the benefit, of any claimant
 To England's crown, it is decreed that justice
 Shall straight be done on such pretender, and
 The party, if found guilty by the Court,
 Shall suffer death."

This law was made—when, Sir?

MARY A year ago!

BURLEIGH To be applied to me?

MARY That Statute is the late and deadliest bloom
 Of subtly nurtured hatred of myself.

'Twas made to blind the people, as the name
Of Law will blind them, to the crime you'd do!
The charge of Babington, on which you base
Your charges against me, is doubly false!
I do most strenuously deny it!

BURLEIGH

You

Have been in correspondence with Mendoza,
The Ambassador of Spain.

MARY

Come to the point,

My Lord.

BURLEIGH

It has been proved that you have roused
The Kings of Europe to a war with England.

MARY

I should but exercise a sacred right
If I stirred every State in Europe, Sir,
To fly to arms and save me from injustice.
Ah, 'twixt myself and England, 'tis not question
Of justice, but of violence, and vengeance!

BURLEIGH

[Puts papers together]

I would not talk so, Madame; for the right
Of Power is seldom on the prisoner's side.

MARY

Quite true, my Lord. I am the weak one here;
Elizabeth, the strong one. Let her, if
She will, destroy me; but, my Lord, it is
The resource of an evil cause, to seal
The lips of an opponent. Let your Queen
Beware, lest, making me a martyr to
Her passions, she herself become a thing
Of vile contumely!

BURLEIGH

I'll tell the Queen;

[Exits, somewhat hastily, PAWLET after him.]

MARY

[Collapsing, violent tears, in KENNEDY'S arms]

Oh, Kennedy! Her hatred is relentless!

CURTAIN

EPISODE FIVE

SCENE:—*Hall at Westminster. Throne set diagonally up R. Approached by three steps. Table down L. Entrance, wide centre door. Also, down L., to QUEEN'S chamber.*

DISCOVERED:—ELIZABETH, on throne. Before her, two SCOTCH AMBASSADORS. Near door, two FRENCH AMBASSADORS; L., LEICESTER, and TALBOT, in serious discourse. Opposite, a group of foreign AMBASSADORS.

AT RISE:—*A paper is handed to FRENCH AMBASSADORS, who exit, C., indignantly. ELIZABETH addresses SCOTCH AMBASSADORS.*

ELIZABETH

My Lords Ambassadors from Scotland, you
Choose an ill time to plead for clemency.
We've been obliged to hand their passports to
The French Ambassadors, who, on the same
Sad errand, have besieged us, here, for weeks,
Themselves conspiring against our throne.

MELVIL

But, Madame, if that accusation's founded,
Your Majesty will surely not place blame
Upon a helpless prisoner, for deeds
Committed by hot-headed sympathizers.

ELIZABETH

Her sympathizers wax too numerous, Melvil.
It is their number, constantly increasing,
That prove our life is hourly endangered
While this arch-enemy still works her plots.

MELVIL

Your Majesty, the King of Scotland and
His Ministers have authorized us, in

Their names, to pledge that Mary Stuart shall
Renounce all claims to England's throne and crown
In favour of her son—

ELIZABETH

What, Melvil! Would

You have us twofold arm our enemy
Where he now holds a single weapon 'gainst us?

MELVIL

Pray does your Majesty regard the King,
My youthful master, as an enemy?

ELIZABETH

Nay, nay! He is our good and trusty friend.
'Twas a mere slip of tongue. Go, gentlemen;
Seek new means of adjustment. On our side
We'll do our best to arrive at what is fair.

[MELVIL and his companions rise, bowing,
backwards, from the room, through door C.
They pass BURLEIGH, who enters, hurrying
forward to ELIZABETH]

BURLEIGH

Good morrow, my Lord Burleigh. What is new?
Illustrious Sovereign! There remains but one
Cloud, now, to darken over England. Once,
Your Majesty, the Lady Stuart is
Despatched, peace is assured throughout the land.
The judgment being rendered, it is wisdom
Swiftly to execute it.

ELIZABETH

Good my Lord—

This name of "wisdom"—ah, how hateful 'tis
When it calls out for blood! Yes, verily!
My soul loathes, hates the very sound of "wisdom"—
My Lord of Shrewsbury!

[TALBOT comes forward, LEICESTER draws nearer]

Come! We'd have your counsel

Upon this Stuart matter which so threatens
The peace of England and the throne itself.
What's your opinion of it?

TALBOT

Madame, it

Were well some other means were found than death.
Though sentence has been passed, it seems not just.

ELIZABETH

Ah? Is the learned Talbot advocate
For our and England's enemy?

TALBOT

Your Majesty,

I would not take the part of her mis-actions;

But, carried in her infancy to France,
Where, in a round of constant dissipation,
She was deluded by the glare of vice—
Nay, carried onward, by the stream, to ruin,
She has been like a straw upon the water!

ELIZABETH

Hers was the vain possession of a beauty
And birth exceeding others of her sex—
My Lord of Shrewsbury, collect yourself!
Her charms must be beyond comparison
When they engender in an elder's blood
Such fire! My Lord of Leicester, you are silent.
The name that makes him eloquent deprives
You of your speech?

[PAWLET and MORTIMER enter, up C.

LEICESTER

Your Majesty, I gave

My verdict for her death; but here, in Council,
I may, consistently, speak otherwise.
I question now, since France is silenced, Scotland
Unable to protest or rescue her,
If this be time—or if 'tis necessary
To carry out the sentence. I would counsel
Suspension of it, leaving it in force.
Let her live on, but with the axe suspended
Above her head, as warning that upon
The raising of an arm on her behalf
The blade will drop.

ELIZABETH

My Lords, I thank you, all.
I'll weigh your arguments, with God's assistance
Decide.—Sir Amyas Pawlet!

[PAWLET comes forward, kneels]

What is new?

PAWLET

Your Majesty, Sir Edward Mortimer,
My nephew, who's returned from foreign travel,
Begs leave to offer homage to his Queen.

MORTIMER

[Comes forward, kneels]

Long live her Majesty!

ELIZABETH

Arise, Sir Knight!

So you have been in France? And Rome? Come,
tell me

What plots our enemies are hatching!

MORTIMER

God

Confound them! May the bolts now aimed against
England's true Queen recoil upon themselves.

ELIZABETH

Yet I have heard that you frequented, Sir,
The schools at Rheims, and have abjured your faith?

MORTIMER

I did, my Liege, pretend so; but it was
To serve my Royal Mistress.

[ELIZABETH addresses PAWLET, but studies
MORTIMER.]

ELIZABETH

You've a paper?

PAWLET

'Tis a petition from my Lady. Stuart.

BURLEIGH

[Reaches for it]

I'll take it, Sir. A faithful subject should
Protect his Sovereign from vain complaint.

PAWLET

[Gives letter to ELIZABETH, who opens it,
reads. To BURLEIGH]

'Tis no complaint. It is a boon she asks.
She would have audience with the Queen.

BURLEIGH

She cannot.

PAWLET

Sir, if the Queen be gracious, are you man
To hinder pity?

BURLEIGH

She is condemned to death.

If now the Queen should give her audience here,
It is equivalent to pardon.

ELIZABETH

[*Applies handkerchief to her eyes*]

Ah,

To what extremities is she reduced
Whose proud beginnings were so glorious!
My Liege, your heart is pitiful. Be kind
To this most abject princess.

TALBOT

BURLEIGH

Majesty,

While pity is praiseworthy, let it not
Mislead you.

LEICESTER

Nay, my Lords, the Queen is wise.

She does not need our counsel.

ELIZABETH

[*Drying her eyes*]

We must try

To find a means of reconciling pity
With what necessity imposes on us!
Retire, my Lords!—Sir Edward Mortimer!

[*MORTIMER approaches. The Lords bow themselves out, C. LEICESTER exits down L. PAWLET watches, as he, too, withdraws, puzzled.*]

MORTIMER

My Liege—

ELIZABETH

Sir, you have been abroad—frequented

The company of England's enemies.
You know our crown can never be secure
While she who fans that bigot zeal, and fires
Their hopes, still lives.

MORTIMER

She lives, your Majesty,

Only so long as you command it.

ELIZABETH

True—

The sentence waits our Royal signature.
 But that, affixed, makes us responsible.
 A most unpleasant thought. No, no! The deed
 Must be so done that our participation
 In her removal be, at least, left doubtful.
 There must be other means for't?

MORTIMER

Surely, Madame.

ELIZABETH

Sir, you have somewhat more of spirit than
 Your uncle.

MORTIMER

Has your Majesty explained
 Your wishes to him?

ELIZABETH

Not—successfully.

MORTIMER

Age makes him scrupulous, perhaps.

ELIZABETH

But you

Have youth and courage?

MORTIMER

Both, your Majesty.

ELIZABETH

[Comes from throne seat, to him, softly]

Sir Edward, if some morning you might wake
 Me with this news, "Your lifelong enemy,
 The Lady Stuart, is no more," that day
 Would see the dawn of much preferment.

MORTIMER

Madame,

Depend on me!

ELIZABETH

God speed you, Sir.

PAWLET

[Exits in room, L.
Enter, from up C. He eyes MORTIMER]

What said

The Queen to you?

MORTIMER

Nay, naught of consequence.

PAWLET

Ah, Mortimer. Youth far too easily
 Is baited with preferment. Let none tempt you
 To stain your conscience.

MORTIMER
TALBOT

What, Sir, do you mean?
Away with pretence. I know what the Queen
Desires of you. She hopes your youth will prove
More pliant than my age.

MORTIMER
PAWLET

Sir—
Have you promised?
For, if you have, my curse on you—

LEICESTER

[*Enter, from L., LEICESTER.*
Ah, Pawlet!

The Queen is much possessed in favour of
Your nephew. She confides the Scottish pris'ner
Hereafter to your mutual care, relying
On his fidelity.

PAWLET

So? She relies
On him? Sir, I'll rely upon myself
And on my two good eyes.

LEICESTER
MORTIMER

[*Exits, C., in dudgeon.*
The Knight seems angered?

'Tis at the confidence the Queen reposes
In one who is so recent come to Court.

LEICESTER
MORTIMER

You wished to speak to me, in private?

LEICESTER

Yes!
First, some assurance that I may, with safety.
And what assurance on your side, who show
Two different aspects here? Which is the real one?
Come! Lead the way to confidence, I'll follow.

MORTIMER
LEICESTER

[MORTIMER gives LEICESTER MARY'S package.
He opens it.

I bear a letter from the Queen of Scotland.
Her likeness!

MORTIMER

[*Kisses miniature; reads letter eagerly*]
Now, Sir, I can trust you!

LEICESTER

The

Contents of this are known to you?

MORTIMER

No, Sir.

The Queen said you'd explain the riddle to me.
For 'tis a riddle that the Earl of Leicester,
The far-famed favourite of Elizabeth,
Should be the man from whom the Queen of Scotland
Expects deliverance.

LEICESTER

How comes it, Sir,
That you take such an int'rest in her fate?
What was it gained her confidence?

MORTIMER

My Lord,

I speak unveiledly. I have abjured
The English creed and stand in correspondence
With Rheims. A letter from the Cardinal
Was my credential to the Queen.

LEICESTER

I see.

I have had news of your conversion. Well, Sir,
You seem surprised my heart is turned towards
The Royal captive. I have never been
Indifferent to her. Her beauty was
Impressed upon my heart long years ago.
I've had a hope, which through a faithful hand
I have conveyed to her, that I might yet
Deliver her; and in this letter she
Makes proffer of her hand, share in her crown,
If I will rescue her.

MORTIMER

Yet you, my Lord,

Have let her be condemned with scarce a protest.
You do not think that I would, patiently,
Have seen her led to death? I hope to ward
Off all extremes, until I find a means
That's certain.

LEICESTER

MORTIMER

Sir, I have the means to save her;
Reliable confederates; and all
Is ready.

LEICESTER

Your confederates—are they
In Mary's confidence, concerning me?
My Lord—

MORTIMER

LEICESTER

This is a dangerous enterprise,
And things may change. My Lady Stuart has
Requested audience with the Queen. I can,
I think, arrange it with some tact. I hope so.
An audience that shall seem like mere chance—
A something accidental. Yes, I can
Arrange it; for the Queen—this, Sir, in private—
Has a true woman's curiosity
To look upon and gauge the far-famed beauty
Of Lady Stuart. I'll indulge her—I'll
Arrange it, Sir.—Wait—

[Up to C., suddenly, opens door there]

Ah, my enemy,

And Lady Stuart's. Come! We'll find a place
More covered.

*[Takes MORTIMER'S arm and goes toward
exit, R.]*

CURTAIN

KENNEDY

[*Supporting her*]

My Lady—

PAWLET

Is't not well? It was your prayer!

Come, Madame, you had ever ready tongue.

This is the time to use it! Now, or never!

MARY

But I—am not prepared—not now! Oh, Jane,

Let us go back, till I collect myself.

PAWLET

No, Madame; wait here for her Majesty.

You well may be alarmed to stand before

Your Judge.

MARY

Far other thoughts disturb me, Sir.

[SHREWSBURY *enters. She hurries to him*]

Lord Shrewsbury! You're a very angel sent

From heav'n! I cannot, will not see the Queen.

Oh, save me! Save me!

TALBOT

Come, your Majesty!

This is the weightiest moment of your fate!

MARY

I know it! And for years I have prepared

To meet it; written down, weighed, studied all

That I would say; have learned by heart that which

Might touch and move her to compassion. Now,

Fierce, burning memories of wrongs consume

All I have meant to say to her—

TALBOT

Come, Madame;

She holds the power, now; therefore, be humble!

MARY

I, humble? I, to her? No, never, Sir!

TALBOT

'Tis not the season to insist on rights.

MARY

My prayer is heard. Alas, the answer comes

In guise of curse to me! I never should

Have prayed for it! 'Twere better we should never

Look on each other. I have been too hurt—

Too grievous hurt; and she too grievously

Has hurt me!

TALBOT

Madame; place more confidence
In her. She's not unfeeling. Did not I
Stand by while she was reading your request?
Did I not see her tears with my own eyes?
This is my reason for entreating you;
For coming in advance.

MARY

Ah, Talbot, you
Have always been my friend. But others have
So terribly misused me!

TALBOT

Nay, forget it!
Receive her with submissiveness.

MARY

Is Burleigh
My evil genius with her?

TALBOT

None attends
Except Lord Leicester.

MARY

[Starts]
Leicester's with her?

TALBOT

Have
No fear of him; the bringing of the Queen
To Fotheringay was his work.

MARY

[To KENNEDY]
Was I right?

TALBOT

Go now, apart, a step or two; for she
Is coming.

[Enter ELIZABETH, with LEICESTER. Courtiers and ladies behind her. ELIZABETH talks, to LEICESTER, in deliberately selected tone and words as they enter.]

ELIZABETH

'Twere best send back our retinue to London.
[LEICESTER dismisses courtiers]
The sight of them, and us, rouses our people
To quite idolatrous joy!

MARY

Oh, God! There is
No sign of pity in that hard, cold face!

ELIZABETH

[*Fixes her eyes upon MARY*]

What lady, Sir, is this?

LEICESTER

Your Majesty,
These are the woods of Fotheringay.

ELIZABETH

[*Feigning surprise, reproof*]

My Lord

Of Leicester, who has done this?

LEICESTER

Dear my Liege,
Not I, but Heav'n has led you here! But, now—
Oh, be magnanimous, your Majesty;
Let pity have its full sway in your heart!

TALBOT

Your Majesty, be merciful! Look on
This most unfortunate of women, who,
Dissolved in anguish, faints before you.

[*MARY, clinging to KENNEDY, advances a few
steps, but halts, shuddering.*]

ELIZABETH

Nay,
My Lords, which of you was it who described
To me a pris'ner bowed by sorrow? Here's
A haughty woman, who's by no means humbled
By her calamities.

[*The anxious Lords try to calm her.*]

MARY

[*To KENNEDY, who is urging her to speak*]

I will submit,
Forget my dignity, my sufferings;
Kneel at her feet who's cause of all my sorrows.

[*Turns, takes step towards ELIZABETH*]

Ah, Madame, it is clear that Heaven has lent
Approval to you. You are triumph-crowned.
God's power has raised you, and I bless Him for it.

Now, in your turn, be gracious to a sister
Who calls to you from depths of her distresses.

ELIZABETH

This attitude becomes you, Lady Stuart.
I praise my God, who has not suffered me
To kneel at your feet, as you kneel at mine.

MARY

Vicissitude waits on men equally.
Do not, before the eyes of others, dishonour
Yourself by so dishonouring me. Do not
Disgrace the royal blood of Tudor. In
My veins a stream as noble courses. Oh,
For God's sake, pity! Do not stand apart
So inaccessible, when I, to touch
Your heart, lay mine so widely open to you.

ELIZABETH

You wished to speak to me, and I, the Queen
Of England, putting by the wrongs I have
Endured from you, now grant the boon you asked.
Well, Lady Stuart, what have you to say?
You're here, now, in the Royal presence. Speak!

MARY

Ah, how shall I begin! How may I so
Arrange my words that they may reach, yet not
Offend your heart? God give me strength that I
Wound not; and yet, how may my cause be pleaded,
Without impeaching you? I wish 'twere not so!
Like you, I am a Queen, yet you have held me
Full eighteen years confined in prison, though
I came as suppliant to you, who offered
Me hospitality, protection. True,
I've been protected—by stone walls; but I
Have seen all friends torn from me; I have been
Exposed to cruel insults, cruel want;
Last, hurried to the bar of a disgraceful
And insolent tribunal! But, I'll think

On these no more; I'll bury all I've suffered.
I'll blame it all on Fate—

ELIZABETH

No, on your own
Deceitful heart the blame lies. 'Twas the wild
Ambitions of your people. No ill will
As yet had passed between us when your uncle,
Imperious, proud priest, whose shameless hand
Would grasp all crowns, attacked me; led you on,
To lay claim to my true and loyal kingdom!
What arms did he not use against my throne?
But, you say rightly, God is with me! And,
That haughty Cardinal was cut off in
The combat, forced to yield it! He aimed blows
At my head, but 'tis yours which falls.

MARY

Mayhap.

Still, I am in God's hands. You never can
Employ the power He gives so cruelly.

ELIZABETH

What's to prevent me? 'Twas your uncle set
Example to the Kings of Europe how
Best to conclude a peace with those they hated.
I have his lesson of Bartholomew!
I practise only what your priests have taught.
My surety lies in force. No compact can
Be made with vipers; no peace be patched up
That will endure!

MARY

Nay, this is but suspicion—
A dark, a wrong suspicion. You have, from
The first, met me as enemy. Had you
But named me heir to your dominions, as
My right is—

ELIZABETH

Name you heir, that while I live
You might allure—seduce my people?

MARY

Sister—

I yield all claim to these domains. My wings
 Are lamed. I am no more enticed by greatness.
 You've won your point. I am but my own shadow.
 My long captivity, at last, has broken
 My spirit. Now my bloom is gone. Your work
 Is done. But you are not come here to mock
 A victim. You will surely hear me. Madame,
 Pronounce the word. Say: "Mary, you are free!
 You've felt my power, now learn to honour, as well,
 My generosity." Say this, and I
 Will take up life again, as gift, so hold it
 From you. One word will wash out all the past!
 Oh, Madame! Speak it!—

ELIZABETH

You, at last, confess
 You're conquered? All your schemes, then, have run
 out?

No more leagues with adventurers to free you?
 No more seductions practised on your gaolers?
 So these, my Lord of Leicester, are the charms
 Which no man with impunity could look on?
 With whom no woman could hold comparison?
 I' sooth, her honours have been cheaply gained!
 She, who was common to all men, with ease
 Became the common object of approval!
 Oh—this is too much!

MARY

ELIZABETH

Now, you show us your
 True face, which you've been masking!

MARY

I have never
 Denied, or sought to hide my weaknesses,
 The faults of youth; the worst of me is known!
 But some will tell you, I am better than
 The fame I bear; and woe to you when, in

The time to come, a world shall tear away
 The veil of arch-hypocrisy that hides
 Your secret lusts. Virtue was not your birthright!
 It is well known what brought your mother's head,
 The head of Anne Bullen, to the block!

[TALBOT, *forward, parts the angry Queens.*

TALBOT

[*To MARY*]

Is this the moderation, the submission,
 You promised?

MARY

Moderation! I've endured
 All human nature can endure. No more
 Sheep-hearted resignation, passive patience!
 Oh, could my tongue but fling out darts, steeped,
 poisoned,
 With my long pent-up, bitter rancour!

TALBOT

Oh,

My Liege, forgive her!

LEICESTER

Come, your Majesty!

MARY

[*Shakes KENNEDY'S arm off. Advances towards*

ELIZABETH]

A Bastard soils the English throne, profanes it!
 The proud and gen'rous Britons are befooled
 By a mean trickster, whose whole soul is false
 And painted, like her face! If right prevailed
 You'd be here, in the dust, kneeling to me,
 Who am your rightful sovereign!

[ELIZABETH *shrinks before her; turns, exits*
hastily. The Lords, in consternation,
follow.

KENNEDY

[*Wrings her hands*]

God! My Lady!

Oh, my poor Lady! Now, what have you done?

EPISODE VI]

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

101

MARY

What have I done? I've thrown the weight of mountains

From my o'erburdened heart! I've plunged live steel
In my oppressor's breast, where, I know well,
She harbours death for me! Ah, Jane! At last!
After these years of sorrow, this abasement,
I've had one great, victorious revenge!

CURTAIN

EPIISODE SEVEN

SCENE:—*Before a Curtain.*

AT RISE:—*A Guard crosses from L. to R. Enter, L., in great anxiety, MORTIMER. Arriving C., he looks after Guard, then turns, meeting LEICESTER, who enters L. LEICESTER is absorbed.*

MORTIMER
LEICESTER

My Lord—

[*Scarcely recognizes him*]
Well, Sir?

MORTIMER
LEICESTER

Your ear, my Lord.

What, now?

Why do you dog me?

I have come to warn you.

MORTIMER

At Fotheringay—

LEICESTER

Damn Fotheringay! To think

Of all the pains I took to lure the Queen there,
And then the bitter turn that ended all!

I am undone! The Queen already blames
My counsel for her sad experience. Go!

MORTIMER

Alas, my Lord, if that were all! Lord Burleigh
Has got possession of the letter which
The Queen addressed to you, my Lord, in which
She faithfully renews the promises

First made to you, and mentions quite unveiled,

My embassy which bore her picture to you.

God's death! And hell! Then I am ruined.

LEICESTER
MORTIMER

Sir,

I bring you instant word that you may be

Beforehand with Lord Burleigh. Save yourself
And her. An oath will clear you. You have but
To find some pretext. You are bold, my Lord,
And fertile in invention—

[LEICESTER *paces about; then stops sharply.*

LEICESTER

True! True! Ho,
Ho, Guards! Come here, Guards!

[*Guards appear, extreme R.*]

Seize this traitor! Keep
Him closely while I find her Majesty.
He has confessed a hideous plot to me!

[*Exits L., leaving MORTIMER dumbfounded.*

MORTIMER

Good God! He'd build a bridge upon my ruin!
Oh, curses on you, Leicester, who betray
Your faith, and Mary, my beloved Queen!

[*Plunges a knife into his breast, and falls, as
Guards rush to him.*

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP ON

SCENE:—*As in Episode Five.*

DISCOVERED:—*At table, letter in hand, ELIZABETH.
Near her, LORD BURLEIGH. ELIZABETH is read-
ing, and is agitated.*

BURLEIGH

Your Majesty, does not that letter plain
Convict him?

ELIZABETH

Oh, the traitor! Yet, my Lord,
Suppose—it is quite possible the screed
Is a foul trap set by that cunning harlot
To ruin him in our regard?

BURLEIGH

My Liege—

ELIZABETH

Be it as may, 'twas Leicester lured me there
Into the presence of his paramour;

And he shall pay for it. Go! Give my orders
He's not to be admitted, should he come.

[BURLEIGH *turns towards door, C., which
opens suddenly.* LEICESTER *almost bursts
into the room.*

BURLEIGH My Lord—you, Sir, intrude without permission?
LEICESTER "Permission?" Who stands high enough at Court
As to permit my coming or forbid it?
Your Majesty has giv'n a willing ear
To him. I ask the like.

BURLEIGH 'Tis useless, Sir!
We've here the letter that condemns you!

LEICESTER Letter?

ELIZABETH Do you deny it? Or that you received
Her likeness? That you've given her hope that you
Would free her?

LEICESTER I confess, my Liege, and freely.
ELIZABETH You traitor! This shall end, Sir, in the Tower.
LEICESTER 'Twas wrong to make a secret of my work.
I own, I have had correspondence with
The Lady Stuart; but 'twas as a means
Of searching out her plots. A dangerous game—
No one but Leicester in your Court were bold
Enough to play it.

BURLEIGH If your thought was loyal
Why should you have concealed it?

LEICESTER Your way, Sir,
Is always to prate much before you act.
My manner is to act, and then to speak!
In spite of all your watchfulness, the Stuart
Were free today had I not hindered it.
Her Majesty confided in young Mortimer;
Went farther, gave a secret charge to him—

My Liege's tender heart might well deceive her;
 But where, my Lord, were your ten thousand eyes
 Not to discover Mortimer was false?
 That he, the Guise's tool, and Mary's creature,
 Came here to free the Stuart and to murder
 The Queen of England!

ELIZABETH
 LEICESTER

What? Young Mortimer?

This very night she was to have been freed.
 But he disclosed the plan to me. I took
 Him pris'ner. In despair, he slew himself.
 Or did you slay him?

BURLEIGH
 LEICESTER

What a vile suspicion!

[*Up C., throws open the door, and calls into
 corridor*]

Ho, Guard!

[*Guard appears in door, C.*]

Relate how Mortimer expired.

GUARD

I was on duty on the Palace porch,
 When suddenly my Lord of Leicester called
 And ordered me to take a knight in charge,
 Denouncing him as traitor. Upon this,
 Before the guards could hinder his intent,
 The knight pulled out a dagger, plunged it in
 His heart. He fell—

LEICESTER

Enough! You may withdraw;

Her Majesty is satisfied.

[*Guard exits. ELIZABETH sinks into chair be-
 side table.*]

ELIZABETH

How I'm

Surrounded by vile treachery! Good God!
 I know not where I stand, or what to think!
 A curse on her who brings me all this anguish!

LEICESTER

I take back all my protests; she must die.
I would advise your Majesty to have
The writ that fixes execution drawn
At once!

BURLEIGH

And I; and since his Lordship shows
Such zeal, were it not well that he be named
To see the sentence is true executed?

ELIZABETH

My Lord advises well. I'll think it over.

LEICESTER

In every sense that suits a Burleigh; but
My rank should free me from a like commission.

ELIZABETH

Lord Burleigh may partake the honour with you.

[To BURLEIGH]

My Lord, will you call Davison; command
The warrant?

[BURLEIGH hurries to door, C. As he opens it
a clamour is heard in the outer corridor]

Nay, what uproar's this?

BURLEIGH

[Re-enters, speaks rapidly]

My Liege,

A panic spreads through London. It is rumoured
That murderers commissioned here from Rome
Attack your throne; that they have forced the Palace
And swear to free the Stuart, set her in
Your place. Your Majesty, delay no longer!
This day must surely be her last!

[Enter, DAVISON, with warrant. Behind him
TALBOT, troubled.]

ELIZABETH

The warrant—

Oh, God—

BURLEIGH

You hear your people clamouring? Sign it!
Your Majesty, do not be hasty!

TALBOT

Talbot!

ELIZABETH

The people ask it— I'm so weary—wearily

Of this most frightful strife! If one of us
 Two Queens must perish to make safe the other
 Why should it not be I who yields? My people
 Shall make decision. I have governed them
 These many years successfully; but, then,
 Naught has been needed but to make them happy.
 Now comes my first momentous regal duty.
 It makes me feel how weak a woman I am!
 I should betray my office, and my country,
 Were I, your Majesty, to stand here, silent.
 This is no hour for mercy! To promote
 Your people's welfare is your highest duty.
 What! Will you leave the kingdom longer to
 The storm of civil strife? Religious discord?
 I'll draw no counsel from mere human sources!
 I must spread out my doubts before the Judge
 Of all. I'll act on His revealings only.
 Withdraw, my Lords—

BURLEIGH

ELIZABETH

[To DAVISON, as Lords, bowing, exit up C.]

You, Sir, wait there, apart.

[Gazes long at warrant]

Have I not practised justice all my life?
 Shunned mere despotic deeds? Have I done so
 Only to stay my hands at this, the first
 But necessary act of violence?
 It is in self-defence! It is an act
 That must be to defend my life, and throne!
 All Europe's powers are allied to destroy me.
 Spain, even now, prepares a fierce sea war
 That shall exterminate our people! Well—
 They know who 'tis who stirs the world against us,
 For whose sake I am excommunicated—

[A silence]

No—Mary Stuart is a threatening fiend
 Who's ever there before me! Yes, her head
 Must fall. I will have peace in England! She
 Has been the bane of my existence. Every
 Fair hope I've planted has been blighted by
 This viper. Not until she is no more
 Can I be free!

[Crosses C., deep in thought]

How she looked down on me!
 It was as if her eye would blast me. Ah,
 The wretch! I am a bastard, am I?

*[Stabs at paper savagely, signing the warrant.
 Beckons to DAVISON, who comes forward,
 receives it on his knee; then, dismissed, he
 backs, bowing, to door C.]*

And, Davison, do you give orders that
 A velvet suit be made to fit the headsman.
 I would the deed were done in royal manner—

[Reacts, sinks into chair.]

CURTAIN

EPISODE EIGHT

SCENE:—*As in Episode Four, save that wide doors, up C., are open. Black velvet curtains cut off view of hall.*

DISCOVERED:—KENNEDY, *in black, at cabinet, upon which are packages that she is sorting and addressing, while stopping, now and then, to apply handkerchief to eyes. Enter, a moment after,*

AT RISE:—PAWLET, *in black, also. He carries a jewel box, which he lays before KENNEDY, with some slips of paper.*

PAWLET

This, Mistress, is the inventory. You
Will see it mentions everything the Queen
Brought with her.

[He exits. Enter, MELVIL. She turns, rises, meets him with little spasmodic cry.

KENNEDY

Melvil! Is it really you?

MELVIL

Yes, Kennedy. And so, we meet again—
But, 'tis a bitter meeting! Well, I've come
To bid the Queen farewell, a last farewell!

KENNEDY

Oh, would I never had been born to see
This day, Sir Melvil!

MELVIL

There!—there! Say no more!
We will undo each other with our grief!
But on this last sad day we must be firm.
Come! pledge your word to moderate your tears;
For, when the rest, giv'n over to despair
Wail round her Majesty, 'tis we must give
Support to her to meet what comes!

KENNEDY

Ah, Melvil,

You're mistaken if you think the Queen
Has need of our support to meet her death
With firmness. It is she, my friend, who will
Exhibit courage, an undaunted heart!

MELVIL

Where is she now? May I not go to her?

KENNEDY

She passed the night in prayer and writing, Sir,
Saying farewell, in this way, to her friends;
And then she wrote her Will with her own hand;
But now she's resting, Sir, a moment.

MELVIL

Who

Is with her?

KENNEDY

None, Sir, but the women, who
Have been allowed to come back to her, and
The doctor, Burgoyne.

[*Enter, weeping, ELSPETH CURLE*]

Mistress Curle—well? Is

The Queen awake?

ELSPETH

She is already dressed
And asking for you, madame.

[*KENNEDY hurries to door. MELVIL would follow, but she stops him.*]

KENNEDY

Wait, Sir Melvil,

Until her Majesty has been prepared
To see you.

ELSPETH

[*To MELVIL*]

Are you really, Sir, the Queen's
Old friend? Then, Sir, you come from London?

MELVIL

Yes.

ELSPETH

Sir, what is said there of my husband? He
Is Curle, the Secretary.

MELVIL

Ah, indeed?

He will be set at liberty, as soon—

ELSPETH

As soon as she whom he traduced is dead!
Oh, Sir, he is our Lady's murderer!
All say it was his testimony that
Condemned her.

MELVIL

That is true!

ELSPETH

Then curses on him!

What he has testified was false! False! false!
It was—

MELVIL

Nay, Mistress, careful what you say here.

ELSPETH

I care not, Sir, for Care! I will maintain it
Before the Court! The Queen dies innocent.

MELVIL

God grant it's true, Mistress.

[KENNEDY *re-enters hurriedly. Speaks to*
ELSPETH.

KENNEDY

Will you require

A cup of wine for her?

[ELSPETH *exits hurriedly, C., between the*
black curtains.

MELVIL

Is the Queen ill?

KENNEDY

Sir, she believes she's strong. She will not eat;
But, with the painful ordeal that's before her,
Her enemies shall not enjoy the triumph
Of saying fear has blanched her cheek when 'tis
But weariness.

MELVIL

May I go, now, and see her?

KENNEDY

Sir, she is coming here.

[*Enter BURGOYNE, with two weeping women.*
All in deep mourning.

BURGOYNE

Ah, Melvil! Melvil!—

[*Sees MELVIL. Forward to him.*

They embrace.

Re-enter, in terror, ELSPETH, with gold
goblet which she sets on table.

ELSPETH
BURGOYNE

Oh, God!—

[*Supporting her*]

What is it, Mistress?

ELSPETH

Sir, the hall

Is draped with black; and as I passed, I saw
A dreadful scaffold, and a gleaming axe
Laid on it. Throngs of people crowding round it
Who, with a horrid curiosity,
And thirst for blood, are waiting for the victim!

[*MARY enters, slowly.*]

MELVIL

[*To ELSPETH*]

Control yourself before her Majesty—

MARY

[*Looking over the circle about her*]

Why are you weeping? You, instead, should all
Be glad with me that my long pilgrimage
Of woe is nearly over; that my prison
At last flies open; that henceforth, for all
Eternity, I shall be free. Ah, Melvil—

[*Gives him her hand. He, shaking with sobs,
kisses it*]

In time to see her whom you served, triumph!
Your coming comforts me; for now I know
My name will not be giv'n o'er utterly
To foes. One friend, of my own faith, will be
Beside me, as a witness, when I die.

Ah, Melvil, fears for you have oft depressed
Me. Tell me, how have you, of late, fared here
In this most hostile land for you, for me?

MELVIL

Nothing has galled me, save my grief for you,
That I have been so powerless to serve you!

MARY

Ah, that I might have pressed, at least once ere
My going, here, upon my breast, one in
Whose veins the blood of Stuart ran! But I

Must suffer in a foreign land, with none
 Of my own kindred by me to bewail
 My fate. Melvil, take these, my latest wishes—
 My blessing to my Royal brother, King
 Of France, and to the Royal family.
 I bless the Cardinal, my honoured kinsman.
 As well, dear Henry Guise, my cousin, both
 Remembered in my Will. I trust they'll not
 Despise the simple gifts made by a heart
 That loves them.

[*To the women about*]

You, I have commended to
 The King of France. He will protect you, and
 Give you another and a better country,
 A better home to all. If my last wishes
 Have weight with you, stay not in England. Nor
 Let any glut his pride with sight of your
 Calamities. Swear, by this image of
 Our suffering Lord, that when I am no more
 You'll leave this fatal land!

MELVIL

[*Kisses cross fervently*]

I swear it, on

Behalf of all.

MARY

Though I am poor, and plundered,
 That which I still possess I am allowed
 To make disposal of. It shall be shared
 Among you; for I hope, at least in this,
 My Will will be respected. Though, 'tis said,
 The headsman takes as perquisite what'er
 His victim, dying, wears, what I wear, on
 My way to death, I would have yours.

[*Looks at her jewels*]

The pomp

Of earth, e'en on the road to Heav'n! You, Alice,
You, Rosamund, and Gertrude,

[*Gives hand to each as she speaks*]

you are young,

And ornament may still delight your heart.

I leave my pearls to you, my clothing. Elspeth,

To you I should be generous; for I leave you

The most unhappy woman of them all.

I hope my legacy will prove to you,

Though it is but two thousand francs, alas,

That I have not remembered against you

Your husband's treachery.

[*Bends, kisses ELSPETH'S forehead*]

You, dearest Jane,

Set but small store on precious stones, or gold.

The dearest jewel I can leave to you

Will be your faithful memory of me!

But, take this handkerchief, dear Jane. I worked

It for you in my hours of anguish. My

Hot scalding tears are there within its texture.

And I would ask a last sad service from you—

That when the time is come for't, you will bind

My eyes with it. I would not have that service

From any but my faithful Kennedy.

KENNEDY

[*To MELVIL, as she turns away*]

Oh, Sir! I cannot bear it!

MARY

Come, now, all

Of you, and take my last farewell.

[*One after another, as named, falls on knees,
and kisses her hand*]

Good-bye!

You, Alice, Elspeth, Gertrude, Jane, and you,

Burgoyne, I thank you for your faithful service.

Your lips are hot, my Gertrude. I have been
 Much hated in my lifetime; yet, as well,
 I've been much loved. There, there, no more! Fare-
 well!

Farewell, my friends—Farewell, forevermore!

[Turns away suddenly; dries eyes; speaks]

Melvil, my temporal affairs I have
 Arranged. I leave the world in debt to none.
 And have you strength, Madame, to overcome
 All thought of bitterness, and hatred, now?

MELVIL

MARY

I do not fear relapse. I have surrendered
 My loves and hatreds to my God!

MELVIL

Then, Madame,

Prepare for one last trial which is in store
 For you. Lord Leicester and Lord Burleigh would
 Have a last word with you.

*[Enter BURLEIGH, who comes forward, and
 LEICESTER, who hangs back, as far in
 shadow as possible.]*

BURLEIGH

My Lady Stuart,

We've come to get from you your last desires.
 It is the pleasure of our Royal Mistress
 That nothing be denied you that is reasonable.
 If I might see a priest of my own faith—

MARY

[BURLEIGH negatives this promptly]

Then, Sir, my Will declares my last desires;
 That I have given into Pawlet's hands.
 My humble wish is that it be fulfilled.

BURLEIGH

You may rely on it. What more?

MARY

Say to

Elizabeth—a sister Queen sends greeting.
 Say: From the bottom of my heart, I freely
 Forgive her for my death.

[*To PAWLET, who is in the background, having entered with BURLEIGH and LEICESTER*]

You, Sir,

I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow.
Through me you've lost a nephew who was stay
To you, who are in years. I pray you, let
Me hope you will not hate me for it.

[*The curtains part up C. Enter, a group of armed men, who take position. The Catholics present all cross themselves. Enter, the SHERIFF, carrying a white staff.*

PAWLET

[*Replying to MARY*]

God

Go with you, Madame! Go in peace!

MARY

[*Turns, sees the SHERIFF. A spasmodic shudder, and quick control. To KENNEDY*]

Come, Jane,

What ails you? Now my hour is here, and we
Must say adieu.

[*To MELVIL, who comes to her, R.*]

You, Melvil, Kennedy,

Attend me to the last. I've nothing now
To wish for in this world!

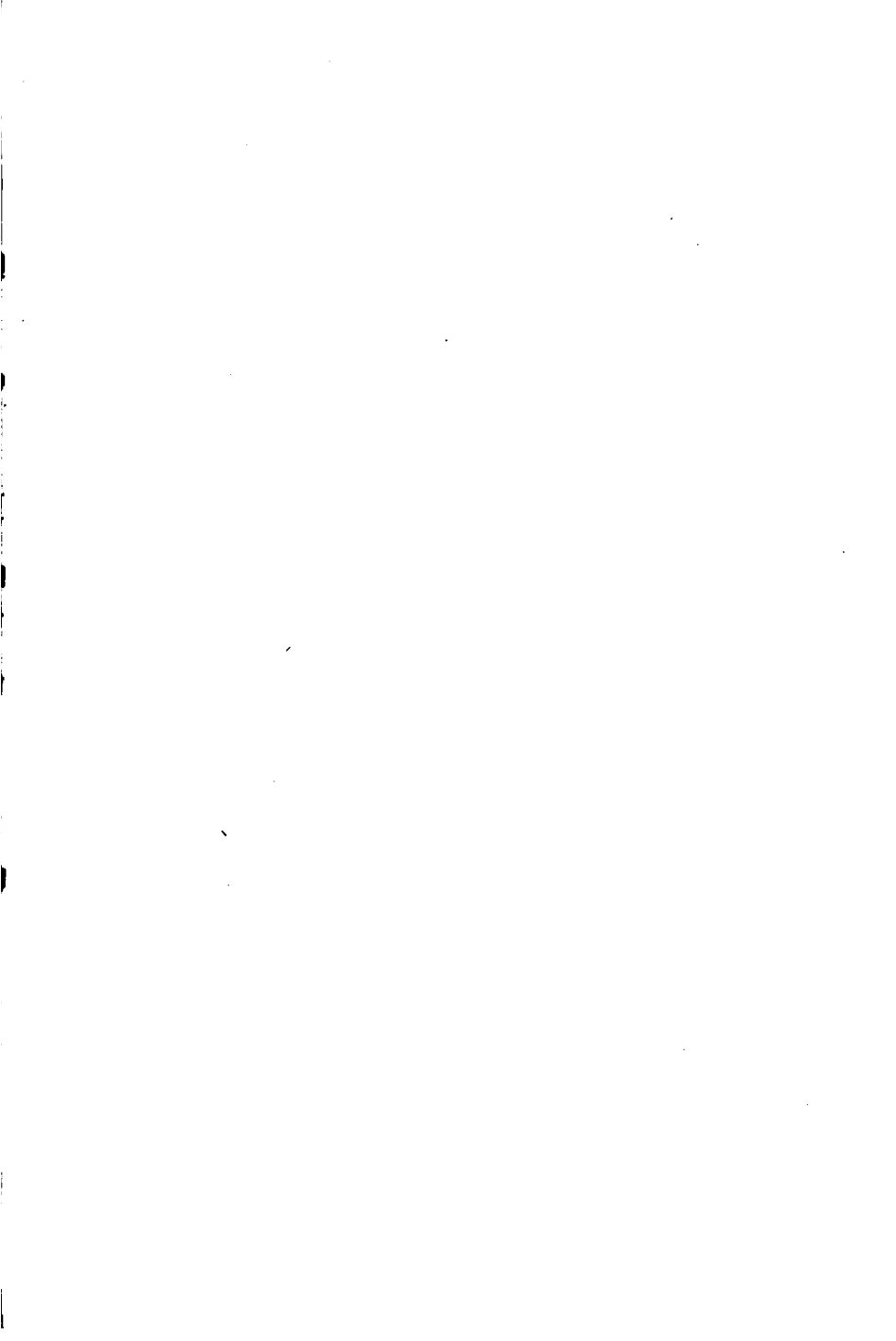
[*MELVIL holds a crucifix before her. She kisses it, clasping it in both hands, raised to Heaven*]

My God, and Father!

Into Thy hands—

[*Turns up Scene. LEICESTER, staring, horrified, meets her gaze. She falters, momentarily. Would speak, but looks, instead, at crucifix, passes up, and out, the SHERIFF following, her women sobbing.*

THE END



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